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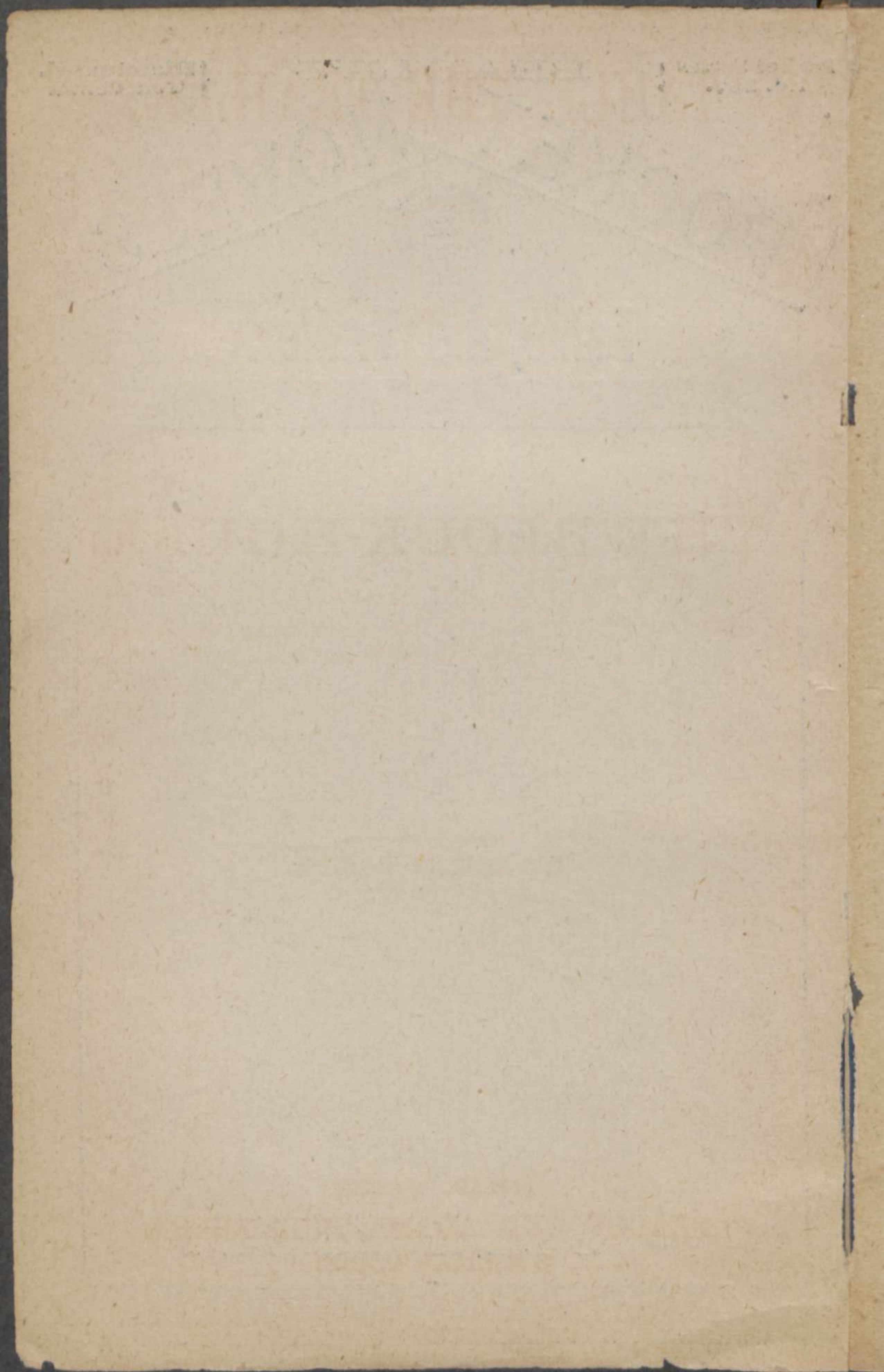
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POCKET NOVELS

Tahle, the Trailer. 257





TAHLE. THE TRAILER;

OR,

THE BLOCK-HOUSE.

BY SEELIN ROBINS.

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TAHLE, THE TRAILER; OR, THE BLOCK-HOUSE.

CHAPTER I.

THE HUNTERS.

He was certainly the last man who would have been taken for a hunter in that great wilderness. As he sat on the northern bank of the Ohio, overlooking its "amber tide," a more jovial and contented countenance could not be imagined. His face was round, rubicund, and glistening with good humor; he was rather short in stature, full favored, and was the very man who, of all others, would have been selected as the one that relished the comforts and luxuries of life. Though attired in the ordinary deer-skin hunting-shirt, the leggins and moccasins of the border ranger—somehow or other, he had an appearance different from that class. He had a way of setting his cap on one side of his head, and back from his broad, red brow, which gave him an air saucy indifference; and the genial waggishness that shone in every feature was such that the wily red man of the woods would have set him down as the most harmless of mortals. Sitting on the limb of a tree, swinging his dumpy legs back and forth, on this pleasant summer morning, he thus communed:

"Wish I had somebody to talk to; makes a feller feel so much better if he only has some one to gossip and jabber to."

He swung his feet a few moments in silence, and then said :

"Had quite a tramp with Polly, here, (laying his hand upon his rifle) Walked twenty miles before breakfast, and, by jingo! that reminds me that I haven't had my breakfast yet. Thought I'd forgot something."

The jovial hunter in speaking of himself rarely used the pronoun, but left the nominative to be understood. With one who led his life it was certainly remarkable that he should be an inveterate talker. If he had a companion he was incessantly making his observations to him."

He swung his legs a few minutes longer, and added :

"Guess I'll repair to the dining-hall, and take my breakfast, as it's getting to be a fashionable hour."

His laugh was not loud, but it was hearty, and he enjoyed his own joke hugely. Sliding down from his seat, he drew a piece of dried venison from his hunting-bag, and commenced devouring it by the aid of his keen hunting-knife. With such sound and serviceable teeth as he possessed, he was not long in completing his breakfast. This simple meal finished, he backed upon his limb again, re-commenced swinging his legs and making his observations.

"Say the Injins are mad about something! Sorry. Shouldn't get mad. They might hurt somebody, and, like enough, I'd get into a scrape. Must be about time for 'Tahle."

The hunter looked up to the sun again, and from his manner it was very evident he was expecting some one. In fact, he was at this place by appointment, having reached it some time sooner than he anticipated.

"Hope he hain't lost his way. Pshaw! 'Tahle couldn't lose his way if he should try. Believe he has been walking in the woods, or paddling in his canoe. Great fellow, that Tahle. Ever since that time I saved him from the soldiers up on the Miami, sticks to me like a hog. Great fellow, that Tahle."

Contented and careless as the hunter appeared, his bright blue eyes were never at rest for a moment. First to the right, then to the left, and then to the right, and it

would have been literally impossible for any approaching danger to have escaped his notice. His position, though seemingly taken at random, had been, nevertheless, chosen with great care. Thick shrubbery and trees completely hid him from sight in every direction save that from the river. A person on the opposite side of this would have had a full view of his roseate countenance, as, from the yielding of the limb, it gently lowered and sank; but he would have been compelled to approach within a dozen feet of him, if upon the northern bank, before he could have seen his coon-skin cap rising and falling in harmony with the swaying of his feet.

"Said he'd be here when the sun was two hours high. Lacks only ten minutes of that. Old fellow can't be far off. Coming by water, I guess."

For the space of about ten minutes the hunter said nothing more, but continued swinging his legs, and looking as jovial as ever. At the end of that time, the motion of his feet suddenly stopped, and he bent his head downward, similar to a cow when about to charge with her horns. He carefully listened, and, although the ear of an ordinary person would have failed to detect the least sound, it was very evident that something attracted his attention.

"If that ain't the dip of Table's paddle, shoot me. Knows how to manage a canoe. Knowed it was him."

As he spoke, a light canoe, propelled by a single Indian, shot noiselessly into view, and, obeying the powerful impetus of the paddle, turned its prow shoreward with a graceful curve, and the next moment touched the mossy bank as lightly as a falling leaf. Its occupant instantly arose, stepped ashore, and pulled his frail vessel upon the bank, where it could not be seen by any one in passing up or down the river. The Indian was rather short in stature for one of his people, with a lithe, muscular frame, and a square, inexpressive countenance. He was without any covering for his head except that which nature had given him. Instead of the defiant scalp-lock, his noll was unshaven, and the black, wiry, horse-hair like filaments dangled over his shoulders, entirely unconfined by any band or knot. It

being the warm season of the year, he was in his summer dress, that is, with the common hunting-shirt, leggins, and moccasins of his people, but without the blanket, which he carried during the cold weather. From his waist upward, his coppery body was without any protection, and a glance at the hard, bronzed covering which nature had furnished it, would have convinced any one that it was not needed. He had high cheek bones, heavy, overhanging brows, glittering, snake-like eyes, and a face whose habitual expression was eclipsed by a dark, forbidding frown. This was Tahle, the Indian companion of George Dulland, the hunter.

As he stepped out of the canoe, he paid no heed to the latter, who was swinging his feet harder than ever, and whose countenance was one broad smile of the most ecstatic pleasure. In a moment, the Indian turned and looked full at the hunter, who, giving him a cheerful nod, said :

"Good morning, Tahle."

Tahle made no reply, but approached and stood beside Dulland in utter silence. Silence, however, was not a characteristic of the hunter's nature.

"Wal, did you see it, Tahle?"

"Me see him," returned the savage.

"How far up the river? When will they be here?"

"When sun there," replied Tahle, pointing to the zenith.

"Did you speak to them?"

"No speak to them; think Tahle Shawnee."

"S'pose they would. Hungry?"

The Indian signified that he was not.

"Just asked to see whether you was. 'Case if you be I hain't got anything for you to eat. Eat it all myself."

"Wait here?" asked Tahle,

"That's the idea, I believe. How about the Injins up the river—many of 'em?"

"Like the leaves on the trees—camps all over in woods—chiefs talk much—dig up hatchet—kill all whites—sink 'em in big water."

"Just so. Sorry. Bad for *them*. Don't think they'll be disturbed afore they get here, Table?"

"T'ink not," answered the Indian, looking down to the ground. "Don't know. Red men hide 'long shore, and shoot from bushes."

"Exactly so. Sorry."

What a singular compound is this human nature of ours! How often are persons, who are antipodes in feelings, character, and disposition, attracted toward each other! What lasting friendships are formed by like and unlike! Here were two beings as totally different as it is possible for two human beings to be, and who, nevertheless, were friends for life. The white man was frank, honest, good-natured and outspoken; the red man was reserved, thoughtful, moody, and malignant, and yet either would have died for the other! Two years before, Dulland joined a party who marched against a Shawnee town on the Miami, to punish this tribe for some of their aggressions upon the settlers. In the attack the whites were defeated, and lost several of their number. In their rapid retreat they succeeded in capturing one of their most daring pursuers. This was Table, and the incensed border men resolved to riddle him with bullets and scalp him in revenge for the injury he and his comrades had inflicted. But Dulland protested against it, and stood by the captive. Had any other man done this it would have been fatal, but Dulland was a favorite with every one who knew him. His irrepressible good-nature, and his manly heart endeared him to all. The result was, that Table was liberated and returned to his people.

About a year after this, Dulland accompanied another party marching against the very same Shawnee town. The assault in this case was successful, and the Indians suffered a severe loss; but in the confusion and tumult Dulland himself was captured and carried off to Piqua, another Indian town, where he was condemned to the torture. It was at this place that his situation became known to Table, and it was through his exertions that his life was saved. To insure him against the fury of the disappointed savages, Table was sent on to guide Dulland to the settlements; but the

settlements were not reached. Somehow or other these two personages managed to understand each other before they had penetrated many miles in the forest, and instead of returning to their respective people, they went off together on a rambling tour, which had not yet terminated at the time of which we write. By some means, never explained, Dulland succeeded in convincing his dusky companion that the destiny of his people was to decline and that of his own was to increase, and therefore the wisest course for Tahle to pursue was to make friends with the latter. The two were well known along the frontier for their many services to the settlers, and they were as cordially liked by the whites as they were intensely hated by the Indians.

Dulland did not scruple to joke with his comrade. He was ever getting off his jocose remarks at his expense, and sometimes when he had said something more funny than usual, he went so far as to nudge him in the side to provoke a laugh from him. But he rarely succeeded. As Tahle had been trained, like all his race, to bear pain and torture with indifference, he submitted to this infliction with the stoicism of the martyr. He did not seem displeased at the liberty taken with him, as he understood the geniality and goodness of his chosen friend, and he therefore passed by his advances in silence. Dulland was discreet enough never to carry such matters too far, and so it happened that there was no probability of the two ever quarreling.

"See any of their camp-fires along the river?" asked the hunter.

"Climb tree—see two, three, four—so many," replied Tahle, holding up the fingers of his right hand.

"Where there's so much fire must be some smoke, Tahle, sure," sagely remarked Dulland. "Did any of 'em see Tahle?"

"'Es, they did," replied the Shawnee, with an inclination of his head.

The feet of the hunter stopped swinging, and his eyes opened to their widest extent, as he added:

"How was it? Let's hear."

"Meet Injin in wood—fight—kill him. Gun go off—
oder Injin hear—chase Tahle like debbil"—

"Don't say devil," interrupted Dulland.

"Run long way," continued Tahle, without heeding him
"Jump in canoe—Injin foller—but Tahle git away."

"Of course," added the hunter, decisively, as he resumed
the motion of his feet. "How far up the river might that
circumstance have happened?"

"Two—three—five—ten miles."

"Why, it must have been somewhere near *them*."

Tahle signified that it was.

"Make it bad f'r 'em, won't it, Tahle!"

"Make 'em see Injin—what Tahle do it for—den lookout
—be careful."

Dulland looked admiringly upon the Shawnee for he
saw that the whole proceeding had been a ruse upon his
part; and he understood how completely it had succeeded.

"You're a smart feller, Tahle," at length he added.

"What say?" asked the Indian, quickly.

"You're a smart feller; know what's what, eh?" said
the hunter, nudging him in the side.

The savage quietly stepped beyond his reach, and
added:

"Chase Tahle three—four mile—make him run in wood
and hide—more paddles than Tahle—go much faster."

"Of course; how did you save your canoe?"

"Hide him," replied the Indian, with a sparkle of his
black eyes.

"Did they shoot at you?"

"Blebe so."

"Yes, and they hit you, too!" exclaimed Dulland, slid-
ing down, and hurrying toward him. "Look there! what
does that mean?"

He pointed to a thin, sinuous line of bright scarlet which
wound down his leg to his foot, from which it trickled in a
dark pool upon the leaves beneath it.

"No hurt—no hurt," said the Shawnee, impatiently.

"You're telling a big lie, Tahle, and I won't stand it.
Must see that hurt—yes, sir."

He compelled the Indian, in reality, to submit to his examination. As Dulland expected, he found an ugly flesh-wound, made by a rifle bullet. It was not dangerous, however, and needed no attention, as the hardy Indian would not notice the pain, and it would not be long before it would heal of itself.

"Did you give anything in return for that?" asked Dulland, backing again to his seat.

"Kill two 'fore got away."

"Couldn't get their scalps?"

"No; lose own if try."

"Glad of that—glad of that," responded Dulland, heartily. "Been trying to show you fur these two years that it ain't gentlemanly to cut a feller's hair off. None but savages will do it"—

"Me savage," interrupted Table, with eager quickness.

"No such thing. You've got a red skin, I'll admit, but you ain't got a savage heart. Leastways, you hadn't ought to have, but I believe you have," added Dulland, suddenly changing his manner.

This latter remark appeared to please the Indian, for a rift of sunshine lighted up the dark eclipse on his face, and the scintillating light in his eyes seemed to lose its serpentine character for a moment. But the eclipse came back again, and the dark, stolid, forbidding expression resumed its wonted place.

"How like to lose own scalp, eh?" asked Table, meaningly.

"Never intend to lose that, so you needn't ax that question," replied the hunter, contentedly.

"Shawnee like him—maybe get him one day."

"All nonsense. The good Lord will take care of me. But I say, Table, the sun is about overhead. Ain't it about time for *them*?"

The Indian looked full at the blazing sun, with an eye as unshrinking as the eagle's.

"Isn't it time?" repeated the hunter.

Table signified that it was, as he moved off. Making his way as noiselessly as the serpent, he approached the

river, cautiously opened the bushes, and gazed up stream. A glance sufficed, and he immediately rejoined the hunter.

"See anything of them?" he asked.

"Dey're coming," replied the Shawnee.

CHAPTER II.

THE FLAT BOAT.

The Indian stepped into the canoe, the hunter followed, and the dancing, egg-like concern sank to its very gunwales. The Shawnee, with a slight effort of his paddle, kept it motionless, as the time had not yet arrived for him to venture out on the river. Dulland, with the muzzle of his rifle, held the overhanging branches parted, so as to afford them an unobstructed view of the stream. All traces of levity had left his face, whose expression now was of anxious expectation. Suddenly his eyes sparkled, and he whispered to his companion:

"There they are!"

Quick as thought the frail canoe shot out into the stream, and obeying the powerful impulse of the Shawnee's paddle, seemed to rise to the surface and skim like a swallow over the water. The object which had attracted their attention was a flat boat, such as was occasionally seen upon the western waters at that day. Viewed from the shore, it resembled a huge box, floating aimlessly downward. A long guiding oar was swung at either end, by which its movements were controlled, and its position in the middle of the current maintained. At the moment the canoe left the bank not a sign of a person was visible upon it, but before one half the intervening distance was passed, the muzzles of two rifles were pointed over the guard, that completely surrounded the boat, and a voice hailed them:

"Stop! or we fire."

"We are friends."

"We recognize no friends in these parts."

"Sorry. Recognize *enemies*?"

"Our rifles do, sir. What object have you in approaching us?"

"Didn't you halt at the Block House, about twenty miles up the river?"

"We did."

"Well, you axed about a couple of gentlemen known as Dulland and Table, the last named being a Shawnee. You wanted to get 'em, believe."

"We do. Can you tell anything of them?"

"B'leve we're the gentlemen."

Instantly three heads rose to view, and he with whom Dulland held the conversation, said:

"I am, indeed, glad to hear it. Come aboard."

A couple of minutes later the blooming face of the hunter arose like the moon above the horizon of the boat, and he bounded lightly among the three men who were masters of it. Table, after securing his canoe to the stern, followed him as silently as a cat.

"We are glad to meet you, indeed," said the first mentioned on the boat. "You must pardon our manner of treating you. It is necessary for persons to be cautious in our circumstances."

"Of course; been big fools if you hadn't," replied the hunter, shaking hands with the three.

"This is Table, your Indian friend, eh?" inquired the first speaker, offering his hand to the Shawnee, who sullenly took it.

"Yes, that's Table," said Dulland, with a mischievous glance at him. "Great feller, you'll find him. Splendid-looking; the women are always sure to fall in love with him and then commit suicide."

"Commit suicide! For what reason?"

"'Cause they can't get him. Heard that the reason he left his tribe was 'cause all the squaws were killing themselves off on his account. Left to save 'em."

Those to whom this was addressed seemed at a loss whether to laugh or not. The sullen, dark look of the In-

dian made them fearful of offending him, while the easy familiarity of Dulland was almost irresistible, so they compromised matters in the end by merely smiling, and changing the subject.

The occupants of the flat boat consisted of but five persons previous to the advent of the hunter and the Shawnee. The leading spirit of the expedition was Sherman Kingman, a young man some twenty five years of age—a manly, self-reliant, enterprising young Pennsylvanian, who had long cherished a desire to penetrate the Western wilderness. His companions were, first, Oscar Whiting, about his own age, a native of New York State, and a reckless, dashing fellow, who had numerous qualities, both good and bad, and who was not, by any means, the best companion in such an undertaking. He was brave to a fault, cheerful and hopeful, but seemed to possess no adequate idea of the journey upon which he had ventured. The third personage was Hugh Whiting, the father of the one last mentioned. He was advanced some sixty years in life, and was a pleasant, intelligent, Christian gentleman, who endeared himself to all with whom he was associated. In the cabin of the flat-boat were two females—Mrs. Whiting, an elderly, mild-spoken woman, who, with some misgivings, accompanied her husband upon this perilous enterprise, and Adele Hansell, her niece. The latter was without father or mother, and had for many years been a member of the Whiting family. She was a modest girl, not brilliantly beautiful, but handsome, with a mild, blue eye, a radiant, hopeful countenance, and a voice whose every tone was music. She was the betrothed of Sherman Kingman, and had given him her promise to become his wife so soon as he had established a safe and comfortable home in the Great West. This was in accordance with the wishes of her uncle.

It may seem remarkable that so small a company as this should venture to descend the Ohio, at that day, when the shores were jealously watched for scores of miles by the malignant red man. But such instances by no means were rare. Constructed as were the flat-boats of that day, they were impervious against the bullets, while their occupants

were enabled to pick off such of their assailants as exposed themselves. Indeed, the boat in question had repelled an assault that very morning, which fact was noticed by Dulland as he ascended its sides.

"Shot at you, did they, eh?"

"Who—the Indians? Yes, we had a little brush with them. It amounted to nothing, however. Nobody hurt on either side," replied Kingman.

"Glad. When was it—this morning?"

"Early this morning. Several canoes followed us some distance, but they were afraid to venture too close, not knowing how many we had on board. You go with us the rest of the distance, I believe?"

"S'pose so, if you want us. How far do you intend going?"

"About a day's journey, I believe. We have decided to settle upon a small creek which puts in from the Ohio side, and which as yet has received no name. On account of the disaffection of the Indians, I was told that it was the intention to erect a Block House at that point, and to give it a garrison. There are settlers still lower on the river, and they certainly need protection."

"Just so. Going to put up a Block House right away. Know they are. Tahle and me are going to help do it."

"That is good news," said the elder Whiting, with hearty pleasure. "This expedition don't look so much like suicide as it did some time since."

"I suppose, my friend," remarked the son, "we shall have trouble every now and then with the red devils."

"Shouldn't wonder," returned the hunter. "Ingins are pretty thick, and, somehow or other, don't seem to fancy so many white neighbors."

"I see you have an Indian companion, who, from all accounts, is a regular blood-hound. Of course he is your friend, or he wouldn't be with you. This arrangement will be Indian against Indian, and then must come the tug of war."

Whiting laughed heartily at his remark, and Dulland joined him.

"It is past the hour of noon," remarked the elder Whit-

ing, "and you must be hungry. We have partaken ourselves, and, as you are now members of our party, you will find an abundance awaiting you in the cabin. Come down."

"Ain't hungry," laughed the hunter. "Don't eat but once a day when I'm out on sarvice agin the redskins. There's Talhe, howsumever, who'll eat anything in your boat, and your boat, too, if you'll give him the chance."

The hunter winked knowingly at Whiting as he spoke, and gave a furtive side-glance at the moody Shawnee.

"I will bring you something," said the father, making a movement toward entering the cabin.

"No hungry," returned the Indian, with sullen curtness.

"No use of coaxing him," remarked Dulland. "Like enough he won't eat for a week, then he'll stuff himself till he's ready to bust."

At the invitation of Kingman, the hunter followed him into the cabin, to make the acquaintance of the females. After introducing him, and stating that he and an Indian comrade had joined them as guides, and with the intention of remaining with them until their destination was reached, Kingman withdrew, and left him alone with Adele and her aunt. It was not five minutes before the clear, ringing laughter of the latter two came pleasantly from the cabin. The jovial fellow had made himself perfectly at home, and his general good nature was like a burst of sunshine upon the flat boat. His own musical voice could be heard telling some story or making his jocose remarks, although his laugh was scarcely audible. Nearly the whole afternoon did he remain below, laughing and chatting and diffusing hope and gladness. Just as the sun was sinking below the tree-tops his face appeared, and he rejoined those upon deck, if such an expression be allowable in the present case.

"Fine women down there. Splendid young gal."

He received a smiling nod of acknowledgement from the two young men.

"Engaged to anybody?"

"Kingman, there, I believe, has spoken for her," laughed young Whiting.

"What I expected," said Dulland, not the least disappointed. "Been a fool if he hadn't. Make him a good wite."

All except Kingman and the Shawnee now entered the cabin for the purpose of partaking of their evening meal. As they closed around the humble table they reverently bent their heads, and the elder Whiting implored a blessing upon the food spread before them. A cheerful conversation then commenced, and the hunter again dissipated the gloomy feelings of his friends. The evening repast finished, the men returned to their stations and relieved Kingman. The hunter took some food to the Shawnee, who, he knew, would not consent to eat at the table either alone or in the presence of the others.

By this time night had settled over forest and river. The moon, near its full, was partially obscured by straggling clouds that drifted before its face, and whose shadows flitted across the stream and wood like grotesque phantoms. On either side the dark, gloomy and silent wilderness came down to the very water's edge, bounding in the settlers by a great wall of blackness. In the moonlight, the shimmering water made a gleaming road through these wilds, and seemed, indeed, the only outlet for such as dared to enter its solemn depths.

As the night deepened, the cheerful look gradually faded from the hunter's face, and it was plain even to those who were so briefly acquainted with him, that something unusual was troubling him. That restless flitting of the eyes, so peculiar to the border ranger, was noticed by Kingman, and his uneasy glances ahead of the boat certainly meant something. The manner of the Shawnee, too, was singular and suspicious. His black orbs swept first one shore and then the other, and once he exchanged signals with the hunter. This impressed Kingman so much, that at length he resolved to inquire the meaning of it; but, as he was about to speak, the cabin door opened, and Adele and her aunt made their appearance.

"The night is so pleasant," remarked the latter, in apology, "that we could not resist the desire to spend an hour or so with you."

All, including Dulland, made some pleasant remark in return, but Kingman noticed at once that the hunter was very ill at ease. He glanced oftener at the shore, kept constantly changing his position, and disregarded the conversation entirely. Kingman was leaning on the long guiding-oar, and occasionally swinging or dipping it in the water, so as keep the boat in its proper position. Resigning this position to young Whiting, he approached the hunter, and whispered :

"You seem troubled about something?"

"Get them women back in the cabin," he answered, with a nervous start.

"Their presence will do no harm just now, will it?"

"Yes; get 'em back right off."

Kingman represented that a council was about to be held, whose session was to be secret, and by this means induced the two females to return to the cabin. Turning to the hunter, he said :

"We are now alone, and I trust that if you entertain any apprehension, you will not hesitate to communicate it to us."

"Fact is," said Dulland, with a return of his cheerful air, "Ingins is about."

"No more than I suspected from your manner," added the elder Whiting. "I suppose we must expect them at all times."

"I don't see anything of them," laughed the son, "except that fellow standing beside you there."

"You'll see 'em soon enough, youngster, if that's what you want."

"Have you observed them?" asked Kingman.

"Havn't exactly seen 'em, but from what I know of the Imps, am sure they're below us on the river somewhere."

"What Indians are they?"

"Shawnees. The ones, too, that chased you this morning."

"How can you know that? How can that be?"

"Easy enough. Sure thing. No mistake about it. The river was too broad where they seen you, and it was in the broad daylight. There's an island a little further down, and there, you can make up your mind, is a nest of the imps, and we won't get by without a taste of 'em."

"How far is this island?"

"Not more than half a mile, if it's that. Thought we might pass it afore dark when we came on board, but was mistaken."

"Are you certain that"——

The elder Mr. Whiting was interrupted by an exclamation from the Shawnee. It was a guttural "Ugh!" an ejaculation which in this case meant that he had discovered something which he had reason to expect.

"What now, Table?" asked the hunter.

"Look," said he, extending his arm down the river.

All eyes were turned in the direction indicated, but none except Dulland understood the meaning of the Indian's remark.

"See anything suspicious?" he asked, turning toward his friends.

"I am unable to make out anything unusual, although I have strained my eyes to the utmost," replied Kingman.

"Where are you looking?"

"Down the river, where your friend pointed."

"Looking in the wrong place. Take sight right over the top of the boat, in this direction," said Dulland, directing them himself. All did as he requested, and he added:

"The river turns a little to the left, so that you're drawing a bead on the right bank instead of on the river".

"Still I can detect nothing," said Kingman, with an air of perplexity.

"Didn't expect you to. You're looking too low. What Table sees and what I want you to see is above the tree tops in the sky."

CHAPTER III.

INDIANS.

Kingman and his friends obeyed this extraordinary command, and now the cause of the Shawnee's ejaculation was made manifest. A thin, spiral wreath of smoke was rising through the tree-tops, and in the rarified night air it stood like a perpendicular column against the sky. It was vapory and cloud-like, and would have not been noticed by those on the boat had not the Indian called their attention to it.

"Only a trick," remarked the hunter. "Built a fire on the shore on purpose to make us think they was there."

"What good can that accomplish?"

"They're right opposite the island. They think if we see 'sign' on the shore, why, we'll either run on t'other side of the island, or close along it."

"And why should we not do that?" asked young Whiting.

"'Cause the Injins are on it, and if we go too close they'll have us sure."

"Still, why can we not take the other side of it?" persisted Whiting.

"'Cause the channel is on the northern side, while the water on the south of it is hardly six inches deep, and we couldn't float a rod without getting aground. The Injins have built their fire and crossed over to the island, where they're waiting for us. Yes, sir."

At this point, Kingman submitted a proposition to the hunter, who by common consent, was acting as their guide and leader. As it was now certain they were approaching a dangerous portion of the river—doubly dangerous in the darkness—he suggested that the flat boat be anchored until morning, and the threatening spot be passed during the daylight. The hunter was in doubt whether to accept the suggestion, and turned to the Indian.

"What do you think, Table—shall we anchor and wait till morning?"

"No wait—no wait," he replied, with a shake of the head. "Injin take all scalp."

"Why so?"

"Go up ribber—float down in dark—crawl up boat—kill all."

"The Injin's right," said the hunter, turning to the others. "Never would do. Soon as they found out what we's up to they'd build a raft or some contrivance and come down slap agin the boat, or if they was afraid to do that, they could set it on fire and let it float agin us. There's forty different plans they'd be up to. 'Twon't do. Must just go on as though we didn't s'pect anything."

This decided the matter, and silent preparations were made for meeting the coming danger. The priming of each rifle was examined, as well as the stock of ammunition on hand. The flat-boat was so constructed that an open space was at either end, large enough to accommodate half a dozen persons. This was so protected by the sides of the boat that an ordinary man in the standing position was safe from the bullets of a skulking Indian. When necessary to pass from one end of the vessel to the other, it was done by either walking over the roof of the cabin, or through it. In case of danger, the latter course only was adopted. From these remarks it will be seen that the flat boat was made somewhat differently from the ordinary ones of that day.

On the present occasion, Dulland took possession of the oar swung at the stern, while Kingman, accompanied by the Shawnee, passed to the prow, and undertook the control of the one at that point. They were now within a quarter of a mile of the island, and the oars were dipped as silently as possible, and the unwieldy vessel gradually worked over toward the Ohio shore. The hunter gave a low whistle as a signal for Kingman to cease his efforts, and be on the lookout. In a few minutes the island became visible to all upon the boat. A few trees stood upon it, and the entire surface was covered with a species of long wiry

grass the best material that an Indian could wish for an ambush.

Kingman was engaged in scrutinizing it, when he was diverted by a second exclamation from the Shawnee at his elbow.

"Look there!" said he, pointing toward the smoke which had first attracted his attention.

Kingman did so, and immediately noticed that the lower portion was much darker and heavier than the rest, as if made by casting more fuel upon the fire.

"What is the meaning of that?" asked our hero.

"Ugh! Injin go there—stir up fire—make it burn more—so see it. Bimeby go back 'gin to island in canoe—maybe see him."

So it proved indeed. A savage had crossed over to replenish the fire, and at the moment the Shawnee ceased speaking. Kingman heard the dip of his paddle. The distance was too great to make him certain, but it was either a freak of his fancy, or he actually did see the returning canoe. Something like the shadow of a part of a cloud glided silently and regularly across the piece of water, and disappeared at the edge of the island.

"Was that a canoe crossing the channel?" he asked of Table.

"Injin canoe—Injin in him—me see him."

It was agreed by the whites that in no case were they to fire or return a shot unless the savages came out in their canoes to attack them. Should they do this, every one was to load and fire as rapidly as possible, and pick off all they could. In case their enemies were so numerous as to reach the flat-boat in spite of their resistance, Kingman and his two companions had solemnly sworn that none should obtain a foothold upon it, except over their dead bodies. There was no doubt but what the hunter and his comrade would do their share of fighting.

The dreaded island was now but a few rods distant, and every breath seemed suspended with expectation. The elder Whiting had found time to whisper to his wife and niece that they would, in all probability, be attacked within

a short time, but assuring them they were abundantly able to repel the assault. The moon now went plunging through the clouds, and the island became almost invisible, but when just abreast of the upper portion, a voice, apparently of a person in great distress, called out:

"For the love of Heaven, take me on board."

All knew well enough that the speaker was a white renegade, or captive, who was compelled to act as a decoy, to get them to venture nearer the island, but the minute he spoke it flashed upon the mind of Dulland that he could gain time by conversing with him, and probably pass the island without being attacked. So he called out, in return:

"Who are you?"

"Have you heard of George Dulland?"

"B'leeve so; good fellow, too."

"I am that person, dreadfully wounded."

"You are!" exclaimed the genuine Dulland in feigned amazement. "How came you to be over there?"

"I was out scouting this morning, fell into an ambush, and was desperately wounded. I escaped by swimming the river and hiding here, (several groans) Help me! help me!" (This was followed by a heart-rending groan.)

"Are you alone?"

"All alone, and I shall perish if—(another groan) if some one don't help me."

"Can't you swim out to us? We have a canoe behind. Climb into that and we'll haul you on board—yes, sir," added the hunter, in a whisper, nudging Whiting in the ribs. "Reckon we will haul you on board."

"I can't! I can't! O. Heaven!"

The sound that followed this was awful—more like a gasping shriek than anything else.

"We're afraid of Injins, dear Dulland," said he. "There's the smoke of a camp-fire over here in the woods."

"I know it. They're the Shawnees who are after me. Ain't you going to take me on board?"

"Walk down to the lower end of the island."

"I can't I can't! I can't stir! Are you going to leave me?"

All this time the flat-boat was floating down stream, and had actually passed more than half the island, so that the decoy was compelled to be expeditious with his stratagem. Indeed, the case was so urgent that while uttering the last two or three appeals, he omitted entirely the groaning which had accompanied them when he first spoke. Little did he imagine to whom he was talking. Instead of making a direct reply, the hunter still sought to gain time.

"Who did you say you might be?"

"Dulland—George Dulland, a friend of the white people, who would never desert a comrade in misery. Are you going to take me on board?"

"He always has an Injin with him. Where is he?"

"He was killed. Confound you, are you going to leave me?"

"Ha, ha!" laughed the hunter. "*I am George Dulland, and my Injin is with me, and plenty others. Polly has got a load in her, and we're ready for you——*"

The whole lower portion of the island seemed to burst forth into one broad blaze of fire, and the crash of full a score of rifles awoke the echoes for miles. Then dark forms arose like shadows from the grass, flinging their arms aloft, springing in the air, yelling as if they were fiends instead of human beings. Kingman, as well as both the Whitings, was chilled at first with horror at the sight, and then each felt an uncontrollable desire to discharge their pieces in the midst of them. The mark was so plain, it was impossible to miss. But they remembered the injunction of their leader, and restrained themselves.

The silence of the flat-boat was more ominous to the Indians than any demonstration could have been. They knew there was something in it, and hesitated to take to their canoes, although they had prepared them for that purpose. They continued dancing, screaming, and yelling along the island, waiting for the fire of the whites, in order to determine their numerical strength. Suddenly the deafening clamor ceased, and he whose tones a few minutes before

were those of abject misery and supplication, spoke as follows:

"Come, old Dulland, you might as well knock under first as last, for you've got to do it in the end."

"When we've got to do it, we'll do it. That was a poor shot."

The bullet of the renegade, which nipped a curl from his temple, was what the hunter referred to when he changed the tenor of his remark.

"If you don't work your old lubberly concern in here we'll board, and scalp every one of you."

"Just so. What'll you do if we shall come in?"

"Why—why, we'll spare your lives."

"Guess we won't come in just now. My God!" gasped the hunter. "*The flat-boat is aground!*"

Such was the fact. In the anxiety of the whites to keep away from the island, they overdid the matter, running so close to the main shore as to get into shallow water. The lumberly craft stopped with a dull shock, and remained as immovable as a rock, while the exultant yells of the savages were redoubled, and the explosion of their rifles sent the bullets pattering against the sides of the boat in a perfect shower. But far above this din arose the clear, trumpet-like voice of the hunter:

"Now is the time to fire! Don't miss!"

And they didn't. Each singled his victim before firing, and the aim was unerring. In the dim moonlight it was impossible to distinguish the renegade, although Kingman tried his utmost to do so. There were, probably, thirty Indians in all—a force certainly sufficient to annihilate the whites, had they attempted to board them. This was what the hunter feared, and what he continually watched against. The water was so shallow, that unless kept at bay, they would rush out and overwhelm them.

The deadly volleys of the whites proved so fatal, that, seemingly in obedience to a signal, every Indian suddenly dropped flat on his face and disappeared. Their hiding places, however, were shown by the flashes of their rifles, and the tufts of fire which continually spouted between the

grass. The island, for the time being, was a literal *Terra del Fuego*, and showed how abundantly the savages had prepared for their victims.

So long as their assailants remained there the whites cared not, for their bullets rapped harmlessly against, or buried themselves in the oaken sides of the boat, but at this juncture, the alarming fact was made known that they had Indians upon the shore to contend against. In the confusion and clamor, these had either managed to cross over unobserved, or else they had been stationed there, and had waited for the proper moment before showing themselves. Our friends were thus placed in a cross-fire, and their danger made doubly great, for it was almost impossible to show their heads above the protecting gunwale of their boat, without being a target for a half dozen rifles. Already Kingman and young Whiting had had several escapes from death, and it became painfully apparent to the hunter that unless the boat was freed, and allowed to float on again, their case would shortly be hopeless. His experience and consummate cunning led him to detect, that amid the shouts and yells of the Indians on either hand, they were exchanging signals, and he felt satisfied preparing for a simultaneous rush for the boat. All depended upon preventing this, and he now had recourse to the following stratagem to set it afloat again.

Through his directions, the five men stepped to one side of the craft, making it incline several inches. They then moved rapidly to the opposite side, back again, and in this manner gave it a swaying motion. This soon became violent, and made such an unusual agitation of the water that the Indians seemed struck with wonder at the whole movement. The agitation was continued several minutes, just long enough to show the hunter that it was worse than useless, for they were only working it farther into the shallow water. Accordingly this was given up and their attention turned to keeping their assailants at bay.

Young Whiting was on the point of speaking to the hunter, when he saw him drop his rifle with a start, and placing his hand on the gunwale, made a sudden bound over it into

the river. At the same instant a mass of dark bodies plunged into the stream and made toward them. They had hardly entered when a violent shock was given the boat, and it commenced floating down the current ere Whiting could comprehend the meaning of all this, the rosy face of the hunter appeared above the gunwale and was shortly followed by his body.

"Got 'em now," said he as he landed among them. "The boat's off ag'in."

The hunter, seeing the savages were about to make the attempt to board them, understanding their imminent peril, had dropped overboard, amid the incessant storm of bullets, where, applying his shoulder to the boat, and calling into play his Herculean strength, he shoved it into deep water, and returned, unharmed, upon the boat. As it yielded to the current, the Indians made a desperate effort to reach it, being compelled to swim by the depth of the water in their efforts. The motion of the latter changed their relative situation with respect to it, so that the assailants were all placed astern, and the rifles of the whites were once more opened with deadly effect upon them.

The advantage was thus all on the side of the latter, when, to their unspeakable dismay, the flat-boat struck a second time and remained fast. In a twinkling, the intrepid hunter was again in the water, and applying his formidable strength to get it into deep water as before. To make the matter sure this time, after he had given it a headway, he waded beside it, until satisfied that it was so far from the shore that there was no danger of its striking again.

"Guess we'll make a go this time," said he, bounding lightly among his friends. "Crack away at 'em, and don't let 'em get any nearer."

But the Indians were making all haste back to the island and shore, and in a few minutes not one was visible.

"Thank God!" said the elder Whiting, fervently, "we are at length rid of them."

"Not quite," said Dulland, "We've peppered 'em too bad for 'um to let us slip off so easily—hello!"

The latter exclamation was caused by a rifle bullet coming

still nearer than did the renegade's. The attacking Indians were in their canoes, where, lying flat upon their faces, they floated with the current, and poured a constant and dangerous fire upon the flat-boat.

"Keep your heads down," commanded the hunter, "as long as they stay at that distance they can't hurt us."

The determined resistance of the brave little band deterred the savages from carrying out their intentions of boarding them at all hazards; and, as the flat-boat had resumed its position in the channel, all danger, in reality was past.

Kingman's first proceeding after satisfying himself of this, was to enter the cabin and communicate it to the ladies. As might be expected they were in a state of terrible alarm. The intelligence was a great relief to them, and they thanked heaven with their whole hearts when he added that not one had received a wound. As our hero returned to his station, a glance showed him that Tahle was gone.

"Dulland, is your Shawnee friend there with you?"

"No, he is not here," returned the hunter.

"He was with me a moment ago, but he is gone."

"Never mind him; he'll turn up again, all right," responded Dulland heartily.

Kingman could not avoid a feeling of uneasiness at the absence of the Indian. He reflected that the attacking party belonged to his own people, and what was more likely than that he would return to them. If such were the case, the crisis of their danger had not been reached. The assurance of the hunter could not place him at his ease, and he was in more despondent spirits than he had been since starting.

It was not singular that the uneasiness was shared by the two Whitings. Although it found no expression in words, precisely the same apprehensions took possession of each. It was evident enough that the Shawnee had some object in deserting the boat at that moment, and understanding fully the treacherous nature of his people, they felt it could not be for any good. And, furthermore, the three were confident that he would be heard from before the night had passed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WHISKY TRADER.

The deep silence that succeeded the attack of the Indians was scarcely less impressive than that which had preceded it. The dim, shadowy shore bounding them in on either hand, the soft rustling of the night wind through the tree-tops, the fantastic shadows of the clouds that were gliding across the river, and the dismal baying of a wolf in the distance—all these were in consonance with the gloom which oppressed the hearts of the three emigrants in these wilds. Tahl, the Indian, was gone, and with the subtle mind he possessed, they believed him able to accomplish any devilry that his treachery might suggest. In that dark hour, Kingman reproached himself for ever inducing the gentle Adele Hansell to leave her home in the East; and fearless and as ambitious as was young Whiting, could he have seen the fearful perils that were already closing around them, even he would have gone no farther.

As for the hunter, nothing seemed to weigh down his spirits. Although he was less communicative than usual, it was only because he was compelled to be so. When a flood of moonshine streamed down upon his face the same joyful smile was there, and the same glad sparkle illuminated his eyes. It would be no extravagant figure to liken his face itself to a miniature moon—so round, rubicund, and pleasant did it appear.

“Hello, Kingman, there!” he called.

“What do you wish?”

“Come to this end; no need of your staying there any longer.”

Judging the females had gone to rest, Kingman stepped lightly over the roof of the cabin, and in a moment was by his side.

“Fine affair, that scrimmage, eh, Kingman?” said the hunter, nudging him in the side.

The young man endeavored to return his smile, but it was such a failure that the hunter detected it at once.

"What's the matter? What's the matter, eh, boy?"

"To tell the truth, I cannot feel easy about the absence of that Indian."

"Ha, ha! You don't know Tahle. True as steel; I'll answer for that."

"I doubt not that you think so, and I would I could feel so. What do you think about it?" he asked, addressing himself to the older Whiting.

"Since you have spoken of it," returned the latter, with some hesitation, "I must say that I have been greatly troubled over it. I pray God that my suspicions may not prove true; but, knowing what I do of the treacherous character of the Indian race, I fear the worst."

"Hang the whole set; I never would trust one of them," exclaimed young Whiting, with considerable warmth.

"Friends," said the hunter, with a more serious air than he had used as yet in addressing them, "depend upon it, I know Tahle and you don't. He'll be on hand in a short time, and will be *all right*."

This positive assurance of Dulland seemed, in a measure, to dissipate the gloom that oppressed his friends, although neither of them by any means felt all his apprehensions removed. They said no more about it, however, and the boat glided forward silently as before. In a short time Whiting and his son retired within the cabin to spend the night, but Kingman remained above, determined to fathom the mystery in regard to the Shawnee before he ventured to close his eyes in sleep.

It must have been near midnight, and just as he was on the point of speaking to the hunter, that the latter asked, in a whisper:

"Hear anything?"

"I did, certainly; it sounded like a splash along the shore."

"Just so. Look toward the Kentucky bank—a little ahead—and tell me whether you see anything."

Kingman did as requested, but at first discovered nothing.

But in a moment he made out a dark, ball-like object floating on the surface of the water, proceeding in such a direction as to intercept the progress of the boat.

"Isn't that an Indian's head?" asked our hero, in some alarm.

"Yes."

He instantly raised his rifle to fire, but was prevented by the hunter. A moment later Table clambered up the side of the boat, and silently took his station beside his white friend. Just then the moon swept clear of the clouds, that seemed wrangling around her, and a flood of light poured down upon the face of the Shawnee. Its habitual eclipse seemed awful in its darkness—so sullen and forbidding that Kingman felt no desire to address him. Glancing downward to his waist, he saw three human scalps hanging there, and that glance explained to him at once the cause of the Indian's absence. The hunter noticed the look, and remarked, apologetically:

"Injin will be Injin, and there's no use of trying to change him, without the good Lord above does it. *That* will make another man of him, but nothing else will. I've seen them good missionaries work among 'em till the Injins threatened to burn 'em all; but they kept on doing the Lord's work, and bimebye the good began to come. The bloodiest of the redskins became as mild as women"—

"Table no woman!" exclaimed the Shawnee, with startling quickness.

"Who said you was, eh, spunky?" asked the hunter, nudging him in the side. "Pity you wasn't. As I's saying, the bloodiest of 'em became just like women. I've been among the Moravians at Gradenhutzen, and if I had ever doubted the religion of Jesus Christ, which I never did," said the hunter, reverently uncovering his head, and raising his eyes heavenward, "what I seen there would have satisfied me. I arrived among 'em one stormy night, after running over forty miles from Indians, who had given me more than one wound. I was half dead, but they nursed me, prayed for me, and done all they could. When I got well I was another person."

The hunter was about to say more, but he seemed to reflect at this point that he had done something rather unusual for him, and he ceased his narration. At that moment Sherman Kingman felt he was a man to be respected—a man who possessed a great noble heart, and a being who, above all others, was a *friend* in the dread wilderness.

"Well, Table," said he, with his usual cheerfulness, "what news do you bring? Will they trouble us ag'in to-night?"

"No trouble ag'in—hurt too much."

"Shouldn't wonder if we did hurt a leetle—eh. Kingman?" nudging him. "Wouldn't be surprised to hear several of 'em were hurt. Looks as though you had done some of that work, Table, yourself," added the hunter, glancing at the trophies dangling from his waist.

The Shawnee said nothing, but a shadowy glance of exultation for an instant overspread his countenance, leaving it darker than ever under its eclipse.

Kingman and Dulland now commenced a conversation in low tones, which was carried on for half an hour, when the latter touched the arm of the former. In answer to our hero's inquiring look, the hunter pointed toward the Shawnee, who was standing with his body bent, his head projected forward in the attitude of intense listening.

"Hears something," whispered the hunter. "Wait till he speaks."

The two watched the Indian. Kingman especially, with great interest. He had learned to appreciate the wonderful wood-craft he possessed, and the termination of his last adventure convinced him that the savage was as true to the interests of him and his party as the hunter himself.

Suddenly Table straightened himself, with a suppressed "Ugh!" signifying that what ever was the cause of his surprise, he now understood it.

"What is it this time?" asked Dulland.

"Canoe agin, ugh! me see him," replied the Shawnee pointing down stream.

The sky being nearly free of clouds, the boat was distinctly made out, crossing the river in a diagonal direction

from the southern to the northern bank. Reaching the line of shadow made by the trees on the latter side, it shot beneath them and was hid from view. The hunter, however, noted the place where it disappeared, and feeling confident that it would remain in one position until they had left it behind, he determined to give it a shot in passing. He felt satisfied that every human being in these parts, beside those immediately around him, was an enemy, and it was, therefore, his Christian duty to do him what injury he could.

As the flat-boat drifted abreast of the suspicious spot, a faint, shadowy outline of the canoe was seen, but the keenest scrutiny of both the hunter and Indian failed to detect the presence of a human form within it.

"Where's the Ingin?" asked Dulland of his savage friend.

"Lay down—hide—'fraid git shot."

"'Twon't save him if he has, for Polly here will send a bullet through a dozen eggshells like that. See what a flurry I'll make."

Quick as thought the hunter raised his rifle, aimed and fired. The result proved, remarkably enough, that Table had been mistaken. There really was no person in the canoe, and the utter silence that succeeded the report of the rifle so astonished Dulland that he forgot to reload it, as was his custom in such cases.

"You may take my hair, Table," said he, "if there's anybody in that concern. If there is he's got Polly's compliments right through him. Reckon he'd made a splash-
ing if such was the case."

"Ugh! hide in tree—drop down."

As the Shawnee spoke, a dark, ball-like object dropped from an overhanging limb into the canoe, striking as lightly as a bundle of feathers. As quick as lightning the hunter caught the rifle from Kingman's hand, but, as he brought it to his shoulder, a voice was heard from the canoe.

"One shot at a friend is about enough, I'm calculating, and now now you'll let me approach, I'm also calculating."

The hunter dropped the stock of his rifle, with a ringing clamp upon the deck, and laughed heartily.

"Old Vesey, the whisky-trader, sure enough."

In a moment the canoe was at the stern of the flat-boat, and, making it fast (the canoe which Dulland and Table had used had been lost in the fight with the Indians) the whisky trader clambered on deck. As the subsequent life of this individual is to be comprehended within these chapters, and as he has a part to play upon our stage of action, we shall devote a paragraph to him.

Wilkins Vesey, as he was known, had been a whisky-trader on the frontier for a period of five years previous to the date of the incidents which we have undertaken to give. Beyond this fact, little was known of him. He traveled over a circuit numbering hundreds of miles, and the season when the settlers and the red men were the most incensed toward each other, he seemed to be more busy than ever. He made long journeys to the East to procure his supplies, and carried the keg containing his beverage on his shoulders, after the manner of a peddler. Vesey was never seen under the influence of liquor. Like a physician, he knew his own medicine too well to deceive himself with it. He was a diminutive, weazen faced, shriveled-up personage, and, for aught any one knew to the contrary, might either be thirty or eighty years of age. His face was thin, parched-like, with hooked nose, and toothless mouth, and skin which seemed to have been made for a giant, so flabby and shrunken was it. His eyes were of that peculiar repulsive greenish grey color, and so close together that the thin bridge of the nose seemed no barrier between them. He was talkative and inquisitive, and it is but proper to add that more than one settler did not hesitate to avow that he was in league with such renegades as Simon Girty and others. And there were men on the border, whose cabins had been devoured by the midnight flames, and whose families had been put to the tomahawk, who declared they had seen him among the Indians urging them on to their fiendish work. They added, too, with reason, that if he were a friend to his own people he could never receive the immunity he did from the hands of

the red men. Whether these suspicions were well founded will be shown ere we have finished.

"That's a fine way to serve a friend," said he, with an air of vexation.

"A fine way for a friend to act, too," laughed the hunter.

The whisky-trader probably laughed likewise, but it was by no means certain that he did. He stood with his back to the moon, so that his face was thrown in the shade, but his round shoulders bounced up and down several times, and a gibberish chuckle escaped him.

"Well, I'm calculating. (this latter word was a great favorite with him) that you have to be careful in these parts. You've some friends with you, I see," said he, glancing toward Kingman and the Shawnee.

"Yes; my friend, Sherman Kingman," nodding toward the latter. "Wilkins Vesey, whisky trader."

"Happy, upon my honor, I assure you, to meet you, sir," said Vesey, sliding a hand like a cold raven's claw into that of our hero, who, returning the pressure, answered:

"It gives me pleasure to meet one of my own blood in this wild country, even though I am compelled to express regret at the calling in which I find him engaged."

"Well, well," said the trader, with a pompous complacency, "there are various opinions about that. I am satisfied with my profession, and that I think is *enough*."

"Enough for you, I doubt not, but there can be no doubt in the minds of others."

Kingman reflected that he was hardly treating the trader as was due a guest, but the minute he had placed eyes upon him, a sense of repugnance took possession of his entire being. He felt that Wilkins Vesey was an evil man, and his presence boded no good. This, we say, was the impression based upon his feelings. As yet he knew nothing of him, except from the few words that the hunter had uttered in explanation, as he was approaching in his canoe, and beyond the mere fact of his repugnance, he had no cause in the least for treating him coldly.

There was something else that did not escape the notice

of Kingman. Great as was his own aversion toward the whisky-trader, it was not so decided as that of the Shawnee, who evidently met him before. He stood in sullen silence, his black eyes fiercer than ever and his face seemingly hid in utter darkness under its eternal eclipse. As Kingman and the hunter were not gazing at him when the trader came over the side of the boat, neither saw the glance of ferocity which for an instant lit up his features, making them horrible in the pale moonlight.

Kingman was led to doubt the justice of his own suspicions of the trader from the fact that Dulland to all appearance received him with the greatest cordiality and friendship. He had learned enough of the frank, jovial hunter to know that he was hardly less sagacious than his dusky comrade, and to feel that where there was ground for entertaining suspicion, he would not be taken off his guard.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE WILDERNESS.

Meanwhile the progress of the boat continued uninterrupted down the Ohio. The whisky-trader and the hunter kept up a continual conversation, the latter frequently indulging in a clear, echoing laugh, despite the care with which he usually concealed such an outburst. Vesey was very voluble, and danced from one foot to the other, and smiled as if he had reached the very acme of human enjoyment. The Shawnee stood as silent and motionless as a statue, his glowing eyes fixed upon the shore, as though he pierced that wall of darkness through and through. Kingman was scarcely less thoughtful. He leaned against the cabin with folded arms, gazing moodily at the two speakers, and indulging in a dismal train of reflections, that now and then were manifested by a deep-drawn sigh, and a slight change of position.

During the last couple of hours a thin veil of mist had

been gathering over the surface of the river. This continued to increase until, at length, both shores were hid from view, and the flat boat was "out of sight of land," as much as if it were in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. So soon as this occurred the hunter signified to the trader that their conversation was at an end, and henceforth a rigid silence was maintained by all.

There was something impressive in the manner in which the emigrants were journeying to their destination. The deer that had probably swam the Ohio again and again for years, without seeing the sign of a human being, save, perhaps, the flash of the Indian's ashen paddle as he hurried in pursuit of him, may have been startled on this early morning by the sight of a huge lumbering craft, looming through the fog. Not a word or a motion of the guiding oars told that a living person was upon it. All was profound and utter silence. Silently it came out of the gloom, and silently it passed on, like a form in mid-air, until the mist closed behind it. To the emigrants themselves the scene could hardly be less impressive. The same profound stillness enveloped them, interrupted now and then by the soft gurgling of the current around some gnarled root that projected into the stream, or the eddying plash in some shallow portion, or the distant scream of a denizen of the forest. On two occasions the faint reports of rifles were heard, and created some speculation, from the fact that they came from below, and showed, as a necessity that the whites were not venturing into a region which was entirely untenanted by men.

It was hardly light, when, at the suggestion of Dulland, Table went cautiously ashore for the purpose of reconnoitering their position, he agreeing to meet them further down.

In the course of half an hour the flat-boat drifted down to a point some rods above the spot selected for the landing place. Here it was anchored in the midst of the stream, and its inmates waited patiently for the appearance of the Shawnee.

"It will take him an hour or two, like enough," said the

hunter. "He won't show himself till he knows all about the woods in these parts."

All agreed that this was proper, and expressed their willingness to wait any reasonable length of time. An hour dragged by, but still there was no sign of Table. A vague apprehension, created by that remark of Vesey, was in the bosom of more than one of the watchers. It found no expression in words but each nursed it and brooded over it himself. Another hour passed, and the hunter remarked that it was time for either his comrade to appear or to give some signal of his whereabouts.

"He may come out at any point along the shore," said he, "so you can watch as many different places as you choose."

"What's that yonder?" asked Adele, pointing toward one of the tall trees near the expected landing place. "I have seen that ever since we have been waiting, and thought it only a broken limb. But it looks as though it were something else which had been put there on purpose to attract attention."

All eyes were turned in the direction indicated, and the object referred to was seen at once. It was near the top of one of the trees, and bore some resemblance to a small branch which had been broken, and which hung downward until its leaves had wilted. In this position, it rose and fell in the passing breeze in such a manner as to cause Adele to ask the question.

The object in question was scrutinized by all for a long time and finally proved to be what he had supposed, a fine piece of deer-skin hunting-shirt. Its edges showed that it had been separated by means of a keen hunting-knife, and the thong severed by the bullet of the hunter, told that it had been carefully tied in its place in the tree.

"If an Injin has done it, it's to git us to come ashore," said Dulland, after he had finished examining it.

"How would an Indian know enough to put it in that particular place?" asked the whisky-trader.

"It's either been done by accident or they've found out and s'pected the flat-boat would balt there, and put that up

to make us believe it was a white signal. It's either that, or else," added Dulland, after a pause, "the soldiers that are to garrison the Block House have got there ahead of us, and have placed it there to tell us where to halt."

"Why didn't they put it in a more conspicuous position?" asked the elder Whiting.

"Conspicuous enough. All would have seen it afore we got by, 'though none but Adele noticed it while we was anchored. At any rate we will soon know, for Table can't be far off. Ah! there he is now!"

The Indian was seen standing in the edge of the water, where it was several inches deep, at a point about a furlong above where the flat-boat lay. He seemed waiting to be observed by the inmates, and had concealed his body by the overhanging limbs of the trees in such a manner that he could not have been discovered by a person standing upon the shore. The hunter waved his hand to him, and in turn the Shawnee gave utterance to a faint, trilling cry, resembling the note of a bird.

"What is the meaning of that?" asked Kingman.

"It means," replied the hunter, seriously, "that something is among them trees that don't belong there."

"Do you mean Indians?" asked our hero.

"I can't tell what they are; but there is one thing certain, there are men there of some kind. Wait till I ask him."

The hunter waved his hand again, and this time the Indian answered by giving the dismal hoot of an owl. Instantly Dulland sprang full two feet from the deck, nudging both Kingman and young Whitney with such violence as to take their breath away, and bursting at the same time into a loud laugh.

"Are you crazy?" asked the elder Whiting, in genuine alarm.

"White men! friends!" he exclaimed, suddenly ceasing his extravagant demonstrations. "If that Injin had kept silent it would have meant Injins was about; but that noise of his said: 'there are white men in the woods.'"

"Why don't they show themselves?"

"They don't know we're here."

The hand of Adele was laid upon the hunter's arm. She was as pale as death, and pointed meaningly toward the trees. He followed the direction of her finger, and standing out in full view, saw six forms, painted and plumed in all the glittering gorgeousness of Shawnees upon the war-path:

"These are your white men," she gasped.

"Know that they are! Hello!"

The last exclamation was addressed to those upon shore, and was accompanied by a wave of the hunter's coon-skin cap. To the unbounded amazement of all, those who had been taken for Indians sent back a reply, and the voice of one called out:

"Come ashore! we've been expecting you for the last day or two."

The anchor was joyfully lifted, the sweeping oars dipped deep in water, and the flat-boat commenced sidling toward the shore like a crab.

"You see," said Dulland in explanation, as he assisted at the work, "they're whites. They've come a long way through the woods, and understand Injin ways enough to paint themselves up like genuine Shawnees when tramping through their country."

"Thank God, we have friends!" exclaimed Whiting, fervently.

"And for that matter, enemies, too," laughed Dulland.

"I'll bet on that," added the son, "the woods are full of the red imps, and it won't be long before we find it out. As for me I calculate on some high old sport among them."

"You'll get it," said the trader, with a knowing shake of the head.

In a few more moments the flat-boat had been worked close into the shore. Here the water was found so deep that she floated up to the bank as if it had been a pier, and was instantly made fast. Kingman and his companions sprang to land, and grasped the hands of the six whites who awaited them.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BLOCK HOUSE.

Although the growth of the West during the last half century has been unequalled in the history of any country; villages, towns and cities springing up as if by magic; immense forests falling before the axe of the settler, as does the grain before the reaper, and a wild and numerous people fading from the earth, as if blighted by a pestilence; still this vast change was effected by causes which at first seemed inadequate to the end. Emigration to the West rarely took place upon a gigantic scale, and success was never "organized" by any grand concerted movement. Small families passed down the Ohio in flat-boats, bands of settlers, rarely numbering over a dozen, made their way through the trackless wilderness, and here and there a solitary cabin sprang up beside some stream, or tributary of a river. These were separated by wide stretches of forest, and for a time were like oases in the desert. But they were the nuclei around which others gathered, and which in a few years became villages of size and importance. As the tide of emigration advanced westward, the jealousy of the Indians became aroused, and those murderous forays which finally resulted in wars, were inaugurated. To protect the isolated settlers, block houses were erected at points easily accessible by their families, and were generally garrisoned by a small number of men skilled in all the strategy and cunning of the Indians themselves. By this means the lonely cabins dotting the country here and there, gathered an air of security and safety, and an impetus was given to emigration which has hardly diminished at this day.

At the time of which we write, several settlers had reached a point further westward than the destination of our friends. These had nothing, under Providence, but their own arms and brave hearts upon which to rely for

safety. With the intention of encouraging emigration to this section, a party of six men were fitted out at one of the settlements far up the Ohio, for the purpose of erecting a block house at a point designated on that river. This point was made known to our party of adventurers in passing down the river, and they determined to make it their home. The settlement referred to was left by them and by the soldiers—if they may be so termed—at the same time, and thus it happened that they were in waiting for the flat-boat when it arrived.

A tributary of the Ohio, itself quite a river, flowed by the western side of the house, and as the former was on the south, it may be said to have been protected on two sides by water. It was several rods, however, from each, and it, perhaps, gained nothing from this fact. On the north and east a space of several acres was cleared away, so that the Block House stood aloof—so to speak—from the forest itself.

When a cabin or post is stockaded, it is merely inclosed by a fence intended to keep human beings, rather than animals out of the yard. The manner of doing this is simple. Good sized, straight-grained saplings are first cut, and their trunks shortened to about a dozen feet, or perhaps a little less in length. These are carefully split through the center, or if this be too difficult, one side is hewed off as smoothly as it can be done with an ax, and one end sharpened like a wedge. The smooth side is turned outward, the point placed upon the ground, and the piece, by repeated blows, is driven two feet or more into the earth. This fixes it so firmly that it requires not only a great outlay of strength but a good deal of time to displace it. The second post is pressed close against the first, so that when forced downward scarcely a crevice remains large enough for an Indian to peer through. So rapidly as the stockade progresses, it is secured on the inside by means of props and braces, and when finished it is often impregnable against the most determined assaults of the Indians. The only way in which they can reach the interior is by scaling it, and, in doing this, they expose themselves to the certain aim of the rifles

of those in the block house. Sometimes a double row of stockades enclose the post, when the garrison feel they are threatened by imminent danger, in which case, if the stockades have been properly constructed, a handful of vigilant men may hold out against ten times their number.

When the Block House and its defences had been completed, fully a month had passed, and the glow of early summer was on wood and stream. The clearing outside of the stockade was extended for a couple of acres more, the sod of which had been broken, and whose vegetation was now giving signs of the inexhaustible richness of the soil. As there was no one among these settlers legally entitled to marry Kingman and Adele, they had agreed to defer their union until autumn, when a journey would be made to the nearest settlement for that purpose. For this reason our hero gave up his original intention of erecting a cabin for himself within the stockade. The Block House was so arranged that there was abundant room for all, and the services of Mrs. Whiting and her niece were abundantly needed there, so that for the summer, at least, the whole band had domiciled themselves within it.

The affairs of the little settlement moved happily and prosperously along, and, to all appearances, every one was contented in his situation. Probably the happiest of these was the jovial hunter. Sometimes he remained within the Block House for several days, assisting, as best he could, in what there chanced to be doing, and then, with a hurrah, he plunged into the woods, and nothing more was seen of him for an equal period, when he returned laden with game, and in more exuberent spirits than ever. On these occasions he was sometimes accompanied by Table, but more often he went entirely alone, as the Shawnee may be said to have lived in the woods. Through the daytime he was always absent, and sometimes for several nights in succession. Where he went and what he did at such times no one beside the hunter knew. He never brought any game back with him, so that it was very evident he was not engaged upon the chase. His absence occasioned no suspicion upon the part of the garrison who had met and known him before,

although neither Kingman nor the two Whitings ever could forget the words used by the whisky-trader upon the flat-boat.

Kingman busied himself entirely with the clearing and cultivation of the ground, in which he received assistance from young Whiting and his father. The six men who garrisoned the Block House were all border characters, who had little taste for agricultuaral pursuits, but who cheerfully volunteered their services when they were needed. As the ground being brought under cultivation lay upon the outside of the stockade, it may be seen that those who engaged upon it were exposed to danger from the lurking enemy in the wood. But Kingman rarely felt the least apprehension. Either Table, the hunter, or some of the garrison were ranging through it, and would be sure to announce the approach of an enemy.

A week after the little settlement was commenced the whisky-trader went off, and was gone a week. When he came back he said he had given up the whisky business, and henceforth should be a quiet and honest settler with the rest of the folks. As a matter of convenience, however, he will be referred to in the succeeding incidents as though he were still engaged in the traffic. Most of his time was spent in the Block House, chatting with and relating anecdotes to the men, and endeavoring to make himself agreeable and pleasant to them. We may mark, at this point, that he succeeded, and that three persons only had lingerings of suspicion regarding him—these three being Kingman and the two Whitings.

Thus matters moved along for several weeks, during which not a solitary Indian, save Table, was seen by any within the settlement. This state of affairs was certainly remarkable, when it is remembered that they were within the midst of an Indian country, and at a time when the encroachments of the whites were resisted with a most implacable fury. Favorable and hopeful as were these circumstances, nothing was more certain than that they could not long remain thus.

CHAPTER VII.

A MYSTERY.

It lacked an hour or two of midnight, about a month after the arrival of our friends, and Kingman was standing within a few yards of where the well was sunk, in the yard of the block house, leaning against the stockade, and engaged in deep thought. The night was so heavy, that, although scarcely more than a couple of rods from the block house, he could only distinguish its shadowy outlines looming solemnly up in the darkness. The pickets on either side stretched but a few feet before they blended with the night, and the silence was so profound that it would have been easy to suppose he was the only being there. But now and then a phantom-like form flitting by showed that others beside him were engaged in watching.

For an hour more, he remained in this position, his arms folded, and his eyes wandering dreamily toward the block house, and following the motions of such as passed before his view. He had stationed himself here for the purpose of ascertaining, if possible, some clue to the traitor he felt confident was in their midst; but the reverie in which he had fallen had disqualified him completely. Twice those around him exchanged words without his noticing it, and it would have required the report of one of their rifles to have aroused him, had it not occurred without any external help. At length, in shifting from one foot to the other, he drew a long breath and looked around him, as though just awakened from sleep.

It was at this moment that he heard a dull, clicking sound, as if made by a hatchet striking gravelly earth. He started, and it then occurred to him that the same sound had been going on for at least an hour. He had a dim remembrance, it seemed to him, of having heard

it in his reverie, as though it were part of a dream. At first, he thought some one was working at the pickets, but after pressing backward and forward with his ear close to them, he saw it was not the case. He listened intently for a moment, and then concluded that it was on the outside, and that Indians were at the bottom of it. Just as he was on the point of moving away to call the attention of the sentinels, he recollected the object for which he had taken this station. This might be the very opportunity for which he was waiting! He now possessed the means of ascertaining who the real traitor was!

He entered the block house, and the first sight that met his eyes, was Mott—one of the original settlers, in conversation with one of the garrison—young Whiting and the whisky trader. This settled one phase of the matter at once. Vesey, at least, was innocent, and he must look elsewhere for the guilty. He joined in the conversation, and learned, without exciting question, by his abruptness, that the Indian had lain down several hours ago. A buffalo robe stretched in one corner of the room was pointed out, and looking in that direction, Kingman saw his moccasins projecting from beneath it. In answer to his further inquiries he learned that all were within the block house, with the exception of the four sentinels, and the hunter. The latter had been absent for several hours.

Kingman kept down the emotions this announcement caused, and made his way out into the open air again. Here he paused a moment, and still unwilling to believe the hunter guilty of any design upon the party he had so faithfully guided to this point, he passed around to the different sentinels and spoke to them. Each answered him, and all were at their posts, and he believed had not left them. This then, brought the matter down to this point: the suspicious sounds, whatever they might be, were either made by the hunter or by hostile Indians. A few minutes

thought convinced Kingman that it could not be the latter. In the first place, it was extremely improbable that they would have come such a distance in the night and make any insidious attempt against the block house, without first having a view of it in the day time, and learning something about it, and the very character of the sounds showed that only one person was at work, and he cautiously and with great care. No; painful as was the thought, he could not resist the conclusion that George Dulland, the genial-hearted hunter, was plotting the destruction of every soul within the stockade.

Kingman returned to his position and listened. The dull, clicking sound was still audible, but it ceased as though his tramp had been heard. The greatest difficulty was to locate it. He could get within a dozen feet, apparently, of it, but no closer. It was in the neighborhood of the well, and sometimes seemed within the stockade and sometimes without it. In a minute or two, it recommenced and came from beneath him! Placing his ear to the ground, he heard it with a great deal more distinctness, and immediately concluded that it was either made by a tomahawk or a knife displacing dirt. It continued for half an hour and then ceased. Kingman waited a long time for it, and then made his way back to the block house, believing that the hunter would do nothing more that night.

In the block-house, the thoughts of what he had heard, made him so uneasy and restless, that, in a short time, he passed out again, determined to watch and listen until daylight. Half way across the yard he met the hunter, who spoke:

"That you there, Kingman?"

"Yes."

"What are you doing out this time of night?"

"I might ask the same of you."

"Spose so; well, I've been out for the good of the people."

"The same object, I hope, that keeps so many of us up to night."

"Of course; guess I'll go in and snooze till daylight, as I s'pose there'll be some more tramping to be done to-morrow."

A short time after, Kingman followed him and remained inside until morning.

Long ere the sun had risen, the hunter and the Indian had taken their departure, and of course, were not expected before night, unless they should discover imminent danger. Kingman, after mature deliberation, drew young Whiting aside, and imparted to him the events of the preceding night. The latter seemed for a moment dumbfounded; he looked at Kingman as if he doubted his sanity.

"Does anybody else know this?"

"I have not mentioned it to another soul."

"By heavens! I can't believe you. Let's take father into our confidence."

"It could do no good, and might only occasion unnecessary alarm. Say nothing to any one else about it. We will make an examination ourselves and penetrate this mystery."

"But to think Dulland a traitor! why, Sherman, I've perfect confidence in him. I believe, after all, that devilish whisky trader is the one who is at the bottom of all the mischief."

"It couldn't have been he that I heard last night."

"Well, let us make the examination you proposed; that will tell."

The two moved to the well and first looked into that. Nothing unusual was noted here. Both stamped upon the ground, but it gave back no hollow sound, and they were constrained to believe that the undermining must have gone on upon the outside. Accordingly they passed without, where Kingman was so baffled that he was tempted to believe that he had been mistaken in hearing any sound at all during the preceding night. The ground was perfectly level and

undisturbed, stretching away for about twenty yards to the stream, which debouched into the Ohio at this point. Not an inch of this ground had been disturbed, not a speck of fresh dirt could be discovered, and their most vigorous stamping failed to give any evidence that any excavation was made in the vicinity. Within, perhaps, twelve feet of the stockades, stood a large stump, the tree of which had been partly rotten and hollow. Beside this, there was nothing but the greensward between the pickets and the bank of the stream.

"It is unaccountable!" exclaimed Kingman, in a tone of vexation. "If I didn't hear somebody hacking gravel, or pounding under ground, then I'll never trust the evidence of my ears again."

"Couldn't it have been the pickets?"

Kingman looked thoughtfully toward them, and shook his head.

"There hasn't been one touched. I put my ear to them last night, and I put it also to the ground. No; I'll take oath that it was underground."

"But how could they, or he, or whoever it was, get there. And where are the signs of it? I never knew Indians or hunters could burrow like squirrels, digging a deep hole without leaving a grain of dirt upon the outside."

"They can't, of course. Just take a look around you, Oscar, and think awhile. We *must* get at the bottom of this."

Both stood with thoughtful brows a moment, and then Whiting looked up.

"The stream."

Kingman understood him. The hunter might—although it was about impossible—come out on the creek, either above or below the water-line. The two passed up and down the bank several yards, but could discover nothing at all. The water was so clear that they could discern the bottom a long way from shore.

"If the hunter came up in the water of course he would

have been wet last night when he entered the Block House?" said Kingman, in an inquiring voice.

"He was as dry as either of us this minute—to *that* I could take oath."

"Then he couldn't have managed matters in that way. We have stamped the ground around here, and it is certainly solid as this earth is ever made."

"Let us make an examination of the pickets upon the outside. It can do no hurt, and may, after all, afford some clue to this devilish trouble."

The proposition was acted upon, but with the same result as the others, and finally, the two young men paused and looked in each other's faces--disappointed, vexed, baffled and confounded.

"I give it up," said Kingman, with a half laugh at the picture of comical perplexity upon the face of his companion.

"I think you would do best to own you were mistaken all through."

"I cannot, Oscar, for I could not have been."

"It only remains, then, to watch again. You will let me know when you intend to do so, and if we together can't get at the bottom of it, I hope some one will be kind enough to take both our scalps."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MESSENGER.

Kingman and Whiting had just passed within the gate, when an exclamation from Mott, who was standing just outside, arrested their attention.

"Shoot me! if yonder ain't a visitor."

He pointed in the direction of the clearing as he spoke, and turning their eyes thither, they saw a man in a half military and a half backwoodsman's costume, striding toward them. A long rifle was slung over his shoulder, and

he walked with a certain, dignified step, as though he had something important to communicate. As he passed in he saluted Kingman, and asked :

"Will you please show me the commander of this fort?"

"I rather doubt," said Kingman, "whether such a personage has existence. There are six who properly compose our garrison, and these six, from what I have seen thus far, all stand on an equal footing. Here is one of them, Mr. Mott, who, I presume, is entitled to treat with you."

The visitor turned toward the huge, massive personage and glancing at him a moment, drew a paper from his breast, and handed it to him.

"What's in that? Writing?" he asked, hesitating to take it.

"Yes, sir; a communication which concerns you."

"Heavens o' nath! I can't read none of your pothooks! Give it to him," glancing with a jerk of his head toward Kingman.

The visitor handed it to the latter, with a "Please read it."

Kingman did so, and his heart sank within him as he saw its import.

"Let's hear what it is," demanded Mott almost immediately.

The former read it twice to himself, and then folding it up, returned it to his visitor. After which he turned his gaze upon Mott, and speaking in a low, quiet tone, he said :

"Friend Mott, a convention of the settlers has been held at Harrodsburg, and in view of the increasing outrages of the Indians, they have determined to send an armed expedition against them for the purpose of putting an effectual stop to further aggressions. To do this, requires all the men that can be raised at once, and the paper here which I have just read, is a call upon this garrison to join the expedition immediately."

"What! us six to go?" asked Mott, in astonishment.

"I suppose so."

"I'll be hanged if we will! we are just getting up a decent fight here, and I can't afford by no means to go where I ain't so certain to git that treat."

"I have no doubt," said Kingman, with a smile, "that your desire to participate in a fight will be gratified, whether you remain here or accompany our friend; but, sir," he asked, turning a serious face toward the latter, "I question the justice of this requisition. We men can shift for ourselves, but we have females who have no other protectors. Besides, this post was established for the purpose of sheltering others whose safety might be endangered."

"Let me explain," said the visitor, pleasantly. "In the first place, you will admit, without argument of mine, that a prompt and effective punishment of these murdering rascals will do more toward protecting the settlements than any measure that could be attempted, and that to do this requires a goodly number of men. These cannot be obtained without making a draft upon the different posts on the frontier. I have already visited several, and thirty men, this minute, are on the march through the woods toward Harrodsburg. Bear in mind," said the visitor, speaking rapidly as he saw Mott gasp, as if on the point of interrupting him, "bear in mind, I say, that you are wanted but for a few days. The instant the expedition is finished you are at liberty to return here or go where you please."

"Who is going to lead us?" asked Mott, with sparkling eyes.

"The command, it is pretty certain, will be given to Colonel Bowman. Captain Logan and Harrod are also to have commands."

"And they're going right off?" asked Mott, his countenance growing more radiant each second.

"So soon as the men are together."

The burly, ponderous form of Mott went up several feet in the air with a wloop, whose echo could be heard several seconds after ringing through the woods.

"We'll go, every one of us! Yes, sir, every one of us."

The attention of the others by this time had been attracted toward the visitor, and taking his arm, Kingman walked

toward the Block House with him. On the way thither the former asked:

"What do you think of it?"

"Since your explanation, any intelligent person can only admit the duty of obeying the call made upon us. I am not only willing, but anxious that our garrison should join you; but," added Kingman, in a lower voice, "you see those yonder. One is my betrothed wife, and the other is as a mother. They it is who make me anxious."

"But if imminent danger threaten you, you can all go with us."

"I could not. If we returned, this place would be in ruins, and we could hardly hope to make as good a commencement over again."

The conversation was becoming so interesting to Kingman that he asked Whiting to go into the Block House, and excuse the two for a few minutes while they conversed together.

"How many will there be left, after the departure of the regular garrison?" asked the visitor.

"There is young Whiting, his father and myself, who compose the male members of the party as it originally stood. Besides us three are three others, a hunter, a jolly, good-natured fellow, an Indian comrade of his, and a little weazened-face fellow, named Vesey, who, for several years, has been a whisky trader on the frontier. All told, we have six rifles for defense."

"Do you fear an attack?"

"We do; and that within the next three or four days."

"I am sorry for that. I think that your garrison will return, however, before a week has passed. With six rifles you ought to hold out against several hundred Indians in such a place as this. You remember Fort Presqu' Isle, a Block House without a stockade, and standing in the very worst place possible, where a handful of men kept two hundred Indians off for several days, after having their room fired a half dozen

times over their heads, and being compelled to dig a well in a corner of the Block House."

"Yes; situated as we are, we ought to be able to keep almost any force at bay, if it were not for one thing."

"And what is that?"

"It pains me to say that among those six there is a traitor."

"Is it possible? Who can it be?"

"There is the great difficulty. No one knows, or at least, I do not."

Kingman hesitated a moment, but feeling attracted toward the man, he related what has already been given the reader in the preceding chapter. The visitor looked serious.

"I have heard of this Dulland, and never heard aught against him, but your evidence seems conclusive. Let me warn you to be on your guard, not only against him, but against that whisky trader. I believe him to be a villain. His presence here means no good."

"I cannot, possibly, find anything tangible to bring against him. He surely knew nothing of what was going on last night."

"That is only a supposition of yours."

"The hunter then must be in collusion with him, and if the hunter, then that Indian comrade, and with these three against us, my God! what help remains?"

"Not so bad as that. You have but one traitor in your midst. I am as certain of that as I am that I am living, and now that both you, and your friend Whiting, are aware of this, if he succeeds in doing the least harm, it will be your own fault. He is in your midst, and this treachery must, necessarily, take place under your eyes. Were you not apprehensive, this might be done without attracting suspicion, but, as the matter now stands with you, such a thing is impossible. And let me say further, although I do not wish, by any means, to give you a false hope, that I do not be-

lieve you are going to be attacked for a long time yet."

"What reason have you for thinking so?"

"In coming here, I passed the camp fires to which you have referred. They are Shawnees and Wyandots, and it is against these former ones that our expedition is to be made. They have their runners and scouts constantly out, and it cannot be long before they learn of our march. Of course, their whole attention will then be drawn to us, and by the time they are ready to assail you, why, with your garrison returned to you, you will be ready to receive them."

"You make no allowance for the loss of any of our men."

"If any fall, I'll guarantee that six shall be sent you, so that you need have no fears upon that score."

"What tribes are upon the war-path?"

"The Wyandots, Delawares, Miamis, Shawnees, in fact, all of them. The Shawnees, however, are worse than all the rest together, and it is against them, as I said, that the expedition is to march."

The two now entered the Block House, Kingman feeling inexpressibly relieved by the words of the messenger. Mott had already made known his errand, so that it only remained for him to give the particulars. The garrison had also concluded to obey the call, marching off as soon as they were needed.

After consulting together and exchanging views, it was agreed that they should take their departure at once, as time was of the greatest importance, both to the expedition and to the inmates of the Block House. As the messenger came on foot, his six hardy companions determined to travel in the same manner, and their horses were accordingly left within the stockade. The sun was but several hours high, when the hopeful fellows filed across the clearing and disappeared in the forest.

"Good bye!" shouted Mott, pausing a moment at this point, and waving his hat as he glanced back.

"We won't be gone long; we'll be back in a few days."

But he was mistaken. Not one of those six was ever to return to that Block House!

The little band of settlers, now fearfully diminished in numbers, gazed about them, as the words died upon the air, and each seemed to feel that a new duty had fallen upon him. Kingman regretted that the hunter had not been present, to witness their departure, and he could not avoid a feeling of anxiety that he and his companion should be absent, now that their strength was so small. In the new feeling which the messenger had given him, he even felt disposed to state frankly to him the painful suspicions which he entertained, and to ask an explanation of his action during the preceding night. But this state of feeling lasted but a short time. The consciousness that, under heaven, his was the main arm of support, in the dreadful peril that seemed to hang over the little settlement, made him determined to bear that responsibility like a man—to act as prompted by his judgment and not by his feelings.

Young Whiting was now Kingman's confidant in all his suspicions and plans. Although he appeared reckless and careless in his manner, yet, the fact that his father and mother as well as his beloved cousin were placed in danger, made him a far more prudent companion than our hero ever judged he could be. He showed that he possessed courage of the genuine nature, and could temper it with prudence when the fate of others depended upon it. He knew how to keep his own council, too, for the watchful eye of his parents failed to detect a sign of the gloomy foreboding which troubled him far more than they did Kingman himself. Upon consulting together, they deemed it unsafe to entrust their suspicions to the father. Although a courageous and well-meaning personage, his nervousness and excitability sometimes got the upper hand of him, and in one of these moments he would not hesitate to accuse and upbraid the suspected person the moment he saw him. But

the father could draw a bead with his rifle, for he had done service in the French War, and, if not fully equal to one of the garrison which had just left, he was, certainly, under the circumstances, as good as any left behind, the hunter and his savage friend, perhaps, excepted.

Mrs. Whiting, as meek, patient and resigned as ever, continued employed at the duties which devolved upon her. Both she and her husband were imbued with a deeply religious feeling, and her faith in the all-merciful Ruler was so firm, that the departure of the garrison occasioned her not the least alarm.

"We are in the hands of our heavenly Father, and he will watch over and protect us," said she, in answer to a remark of her husband.

She could not avoid a natural anxiety for those around her, although her words scarcely showed it. She seemed to hover around the Block House like an angel of soothing gentleness and love, her very presence carrying in itself a balm of peace and quiet.

The same reverent, religious feeling that characterized Mrs. Whiting was reproduced in Adele Hansell; but youthful, hopeful and joyous as she was, her faith had not yet been tempered, as had hers, by years of sorrow and suffering. Loving Sherman Kingman with the whole wealth of her soul, and sharing with him the roseate dreams of the fairy future, she, too, shared the same fears, the same apprehensions, and the same terrors. She knew of the horrid atrocities committed upon her people by the dark men of the woods, and she possessed that mortal horror of them which is often seen in her sex. They sometimes seemed to her like an order of vampyres, black, terrible, awful, whose very presence she could not bear. This may be said to have been her feelings toward her *ideal* Indian—him of whom she had read and heard so much; but when brought in communion with them, as shown in the case of Table, it was entirely different. Remorselessly cruel as a people, and fierce in their hatred of the whites, they still had their exceptions. Deep and lasting as was their enmity their friendship was equally strong and enduring. What brighter

names can be found among our heroes, whom we delight to honor and cherish, than that of Logan, chief of the Cayugas, whose entire family were mercilessly put to death in 1774 by the very people in whose service his life had been spent? The chivalrous Tecumseh, the brave, far-seeing Michikiniqua, the wise counsellor and warrior, Keokuk, chief of the Sacs and Foxes, are only a few among the hundreds of instances proving that bravery, oratory, and true nobility of heart are confined to no particular nation or class of individuals.

The pure, self-sacrificing affection of Adele Hansell made her a willing adventurer in the forests of the Great West. Borne up by the consciousness that she was near the object of her love, that she shared all dangers equally with him, and that no blow could strike the one without injuring the other, the terrors that had loomed up so threateningly before her, dissolved in the clear heaven of her own creation. And many a dark hour of Kingman's was brightened by the knowledge of that great wealth of affection, many a gloomy reverie was dispelled by the sunshine of her presence, and sweet and blissful were the communions that he held with this sweet being, who shrank at no sacrifice, however great, for him.

But the very fact of the existence of these, only increased his anxiety and apprehension. The certainty that the safety of the dearest object on earth was in jeopardy, took away their full and perfect enjoyment, and now, when the darkest hour of all had come, need it be wondered that he was distrustful, apprehensive, and fearful of what it would bring forth?

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE FOREST.

The confident assertion of the messenger that the war-party would not visit the Block House for a considerable time seemed, in a great measure, to relieve the painful apprehen-

sion or Adele Hansell and the Whitings. While the diligence and caution of the latter were redoubled, their faces lost their habitual gloom, and more frequently lighted up with smiles and words of encouragement. They passed to and fro with elastic steps, sometimes even venting the exuberance of their feelings in snatches of songs; and, although when the solemn night came down upon the great forest, their voices were hushed to whispers, yet the morning sun chased all fear and terror away again. Sherman Kingman seemed the only one who was doubtful and anxious.

Especially was this change of spirit seen in Adele Hansell. During the presence of the soldiers she had shared Kingman's painful apprehension with him; but now, that she had heard the words of cheer, her emotions underwent a strong reaction, and where the future had been darkened by threatening clouds, was now the clear, roseate sky of hope and peace. Her voice rose as merrily as the lark's as she busied herself with her labor, and seemed, in a great measure, to heighten the feelings of those around her.

The day dawned clear and bright, and as the sun passed on to the meridian, its warmth became like that of midsummer. Hardly a breath of air stirred the branches overhead, and the sky was unflecked by a single cloud. Whiting, the younger, was serving as sentinel, and it must be confessed that the sultriness of the day had considerable effect upon him. His eye was not sweeping as constantly along the edge of the forest as it should have been. Perhaps the knowledge that Dulland and Table were both in the woods, with the avowed intention of watching for the approach of any foe, may have influenced him somewhat. Be that as it may, it was certain that he was so absent-minded and careless that he did not notice Adele as she passed out and wandered dreamily away.

There was no intentional wrong in this act of the maiden's. Had she been convinced that she was incurring any danger in doing so she never would have taken the first step. But the confinement within the stockades for the past few weeks had been so irksome that she ventured out merely as a relief, believing she would be seen and

called back by her friends if they deemed such a proceeding imprudent. Finding that no one opposed her, she felt encouraged, and went on without fear or misgiving.

As she entered the arches of the forest, the cool breezes coming from their "inmost darkness," the soft wind gently bowing the branches overhead, and the rustle of the crisp leaves beneath her feet, filled her being with a dreamy, tranquil enjoyment, to which she had been a stranger before. Removing her bonnet from her head, she swung it carelessly at arm's length, and giving utterance to a hymn, in a low, melodious voice, she wandered onward, without noticing the direction or the distance.

In the delicious cool of the green woods, Adele continued walking slowly forward, stopping now and then to pluck the dandelion that shone like a fleck of melted gold dropped in the grassy earth. Here and there were patches of bright green, amidst which some wild flower of bright blue or crimson gleamed in dazzling contrast, the whole making a carpet as gorgeously beautiful as if woven in the Orient. At the foot of a towering oak bubbled a spring of water as clear as the mountain air itself, and of icy coldness. The black, gnarled roots twisted in and out of it, and the bright sands danced in the bottom like quicksilver. Resting upon the strong, gnarled, arm-like roots, Adele knelt down and quaffed the refreshing fluid, and then bathed her forehead with it.

Somewhat wearied, she seated herself upon the velvety moss above, and leaning against the rough bark of the oak, gazed dreamily about her. The tall trees, rising like columns, around many of which the poison-vine twisted, like some serpent striving to reach the head, that he might strangle it, the rich, rank shrubbery, and the spots here and there where the blue sky shone through—all these she saw as if in a dream, her senses more asleep than awake. Finally her head dropped upon her shoulder, her eyes closed, and she slept a dreamless sleep.

An hour passed, and the sun was well advanced beyond the zenith, and still her slumber lasted. The breeze, as it passed, gently swayed her hair, which had fallen down upon

her shoulder, and now and then a leaf came silently downward, and one dropping upon her arm, the sleeve of which, in its careless disposal, was raised above the elbow, she was roused from her slumber, and looked about her. For a moment she failed to realize her situation, but as she gazed at her surroundings—the column-like trees, the luxuriant shrubbery, and creeping vines, her memory brought all back to her. It seemed she had been unconscious many hours, and somewhat alarmed when she recollected that she had wandered a good distance in the wood, she placed her bonnet upon her head, and was about to rise, when a slight noise at her side attracted her attention.

Deeming it nothing more than some falling twig or leaf, she turned her gaze in that direction, and gave utterance to a slight scream, as she saw what, at first, she took to be a young, clumsy, but large-sized dog, which lay whining and rolling in the leaves, as if inviting a caress from her hand. He was covered with coarse, shaggy hair, had strange paws and curious-looking head, beside which there were several other peculiarities that struck her as singular at the time. Judging it best to propitiate an animal, that in its anger might be very dangerous to her, she reached out her hand, and called it to her. The brute lumbered awkwardly forward with a shambling gait unlike any movement seen in a dog, and lowered its head for the offered kindness.

As the hand of the girl touched the warm, glossy coat, a repulsive thrill shot through her, and when her fingers passed over the yielding plumpness of the neck and shoulders it seemed as if she were fondling some loathsome reptile. The brute whined and nestled closer to her, and half rolled over upon the skirts of her dress. Its strange, dumpy shape excited her disgust more and more, and she was about rising to her feet, when another growl startled her from the same point where she had first heard the noise. Looking in that direction, she was nearly transfixed with terror at espying a huge, full-grown bear scarcely a dozen feet from her. She understood at once that she had been

caressing its cub, and the mother alarmed at the situation of her offspring, was approaching to its assistance.

At sight of this new and more appalling danger, Adele was completely powerless for a few moments. During this short time the bear came swinging forward, and passed her, and dropped down upon its haunches directly before her, and at the distance of about six feet. Her hand was still resting upon the neck of the cub, when a peculiar growl from the mother caused him to rush to her, where, receiving another command, he nestled down, and lay as motionless as if he were dead.

What strange freak lead the bear to take this position and calmly confront the terrified maiden, it is impossible to say. Perhaps, like the cat, conscious that her prey was already in her power, she wished to play with its fear, and torment it with additional horror before destroying it. Such a course is so unusual with the bear—although often known of the panther and other of the feline species—that our explanation may well be questioned. We may not be amiss in conjecturing that the brute intended no harm at all, understanding that its cub was not in danger, and only wished to be high enough to guard it against violence.

The look of Adele rose from the sharp, black claws of the feet up to the head, with its small ears, its open mouth and lolling, red tongue, its white, glistening teeth, its black snout, with its huge, ink-like drops of perspiration, and its large, dark hazel eyes. Upon these her gaze, seemingly without any volition of her own, fixed itself. She had heard the hunters, in relating their stories of adventure, tell how, when threatened with death by some fierce animal they had looked it out of countenance! that is, charmed, transfixed, or fascinated it, so that it was rendered harmless; and not doubting but that the beast had resolved upon her own life, she determined to adopt this means with it.

The huge hazel eyes of the bear were fixed upon her with an expression that seemed almost human in its intelligence, and looking full in them, the maiden appeared to concentrate all the fierceness of her being in her own mild orbs, and to return the threatening gaze with a look of de-

fiance and hate. While thus looking bravely, and unblushingly, the white speck upon the black pupil of the brute (simply nothing more than the point where the light was reflected) assumed a star-like appearance, and quivered and scintillated as if passing to and fro. Now it seemed twinkling far off in the very sky, and then it approached until it almost touched her own face. There was something mysterious and unexplainable in the magnetic condition of the body of the girl and of that of the brute, something such as is sometimes manifested in the serpent, which both attracted and repulsed. As a substance charged with positive electricity is attracted toward one negatively charged, and when brought in contact with it an interchange at once takes place, so, in this instance, a communication seemed established between that subtle principle in the human being and in the brute, as if it were seeking its equilibrium.

Both glances became intensely fixed, as if held by a singular fascination, and in that moment of strange sensation, Adele was sensible that in exerting her power over the brute, he, in turn, held a transfixing control over her. That shining spot of light in the centre of the eye of the beast, dwindled to a needle-like point of the most wonderful brightness, and then approached and expanded in rings of revolving light that closed over and darted in and under each other, backward and forward, with a quickness that was bewildering. Sometimes these rings seemed one broad glare, doubling with lightning-like rapidity, and then as they moved more slowly, veins ran through them like the grain in wood. Then again they receded far away, until they appeared like a small ball of fire, shivering, revolving, and swaying in a sky of darkness.

Suddenly assuming a radiance that was terrible, it shot straight forward toward her, until it ran riot in her own brain. Hither and thither, undulating backward and forward, it seemed to cross and recross through it, until concentrating again, it went through the air back to its throne, the orb of the brute. Amid all this gorgeousness, this gleaming, dazzling bewilderment of light and fire, Adele

never once lost sight of the dark form of the bear. Sometimes it became dim and vague, sometimes assumed gigantic proportions, until it covered her whole field of vision, but it was ever before her, black, baleful and hideous.

She felt that she could move and the desire was not wanting. But an incubus rested upon her will such as is sometimes experienced when half unconscious under the influence of some drug. There was that consciousness that a single effort would throw off the spell and set her free, but the same dreamy, indolent languor that deferred the effort, and that same dislike, overcoming and holding in check the opposing wish to free herself from the dreadful spell.

Not once was that wondrous, subtle light from before her eyes. Expanding, contracting, retreating, advancing, shuddering, revolving with every imaginable motion, never once losing its terrible brilliancy, it burned right into her. Now she grew dizzy and faint, and felt as if lifted clear from the earth and floating off like a feather through the air alone. With an undulating motion, floating hither and thither through this infinity of darkness, she sometimes fancied she was borne thither on the wings of angels, and then her spirit shrank terrified within her at the thought that she was transported to the realms of despair, where the bear was changed into an immense mountain black as midnight, from which two baleful fires gleamed with a heat that pierced her through and through.

Then, again, that swaying, wave-like motion, suddenly increased, and she was hauled hither and thither (but without violence or harm) down dizzying columns of darkness, enveloped in spinning zones of delicate velvety texture, palpable as it seemed to the touch. Her sensations were the most exquisite pain and pleasure, an ecstasy of madness, a delirium of bliss and torment. In these seconds of transition, the girl felt that she traversed the bounds of the universe, flitting with the quickness of thought from one extremity to another, through millions upon millions of miles of space. She crossed the orbits of worlds, the great red spheres revolving by her in the "blackening void." She comprehended their vastness as they shot by her, and their

magnitude converged to a mere point in the far off depths of space.

But, never, in all this marvellous journeying of the mind, did she encounter the semblance of a spirit or human being. She was alone in a world of worlds, attracted and repulsed with an irresistible rapidity by that baleful fire, burning in the forehead of that shadowy, gigantic phantom. Sometimes she felt as if fanned by the wings of angels, but their forms were invisible—there was nothing but the dim vagueness of that ever-present phantom before her.

And yet another change. That continuous revolving of space and matter—that incessant rapidity of change, now began to cease, and everything gradually became stationary. She herself seemed to come to rest in the very center of the universe, and to commence sinking slowly down—down—down—toward the earth, countless leagues below her. Her motion continued to increase until her descent was like that of a meteor, although without that violence which is the inseparable accompaniment of the progress of a large body. As before, the mountainous figure of the brute was ever before her, descending with the same swiftness and silence.

As gently as a feather, she touched the earth. A dark cloud passed before the baleful fire, and shut it out. She breathed, she moved, the spell was gone.

Whether the motion of the cub, in springing before its mother's face, or whether—what seems the most probable—the equilibrium of that mysterious, unknown principle, which we call magnetism, found its level in the brute and the human being, we are unable to say. But certain it is, that Adele awoke, as it were, without feeling the least influence of that fascination which had transfixed her for a few moments. There was a peculiar faintness or sickness, which might be the natural result of the intense fear caused by the unexpected appearance of the bear. But she was herself, with a volition and full consciousness; and, though the brute still sat there on her haunches, giving vent now and then to a threatening growl, while her offspring frolick-

ed around her, Adele arose calmly to her feet, and moved away from it

With a fiercer growl than before, the bear arose and followed. The terrified girl glanced back, when she saw the savage brute halt by the spring, and lap up several mouthfuls, and then shamle off in an opposite direction, followed by her cub. It was of the common black species which, attacks a person only when hungry or enraged.

"Heavenly Father, I thank thee for deliverance from that danger," murmured Adele, reverently raising her eye to Heaven.

She made rapidly through the wood, fully determined not to be so imprudent as to wander off again without some one to accompany her. It had never once entered her head that it was not Indians alone whom she had to fear; that in these vast forests were hundreds of beasts, dangerous even to the armed hunter who encountered them. It was Providence alone that had saved her from this peril.

All at once Adele paused. While pressing hurriedly forward, it had not occurred to her that she might be taking a wrong direction, and she now discovered for the first time, that she had lost her way. She had no more idea of the proper course to take in order to reach the Block House than if she were a thousand miles away from it.

While still trembling in doubt, suspense and terror, the snapping of a twig caught her ear, and turning her alarmed gaze around, she saw that some one was approaching through the undergrowth.

CHAPTER X.

A SUSPICIOUS GUIDE.

The new-comer was Wilkins Vesey, the whisky trader. He came gliding and smirking along so noiselessly that Adele would not have suspected his proximity, had not a twig snapped beneath his tread.

His face was wrinkled into a broad grin, making it far more hideous than when its usual expression was upon it. Slipping onward, until he almost touched her, he said:

"Why, this is Miss Adele Hansell, as sure as I'm living. I am astonished to see you so far from the Block House."

"I wandered here a considerable time since, hardly suspecting the great risk which I ran. Pray, am I far from home?"

"Quite a distance, a half mile I should think."

"Can it be possible? Of course you know the way back?"

"Certainly, my dear friend."

"I shall have to trouble you to guide me then, I paid so little heed to my steps, and the sight of that bear has so terrified me, that I have no idea at all of the proper direction for me to take."

"Just so, but did I understand you to say that you had seen a bear, a real live, fierce bear?"

"Yes, yes, I will give you the particulars, as soon as we reach home. It was not much of an adventure."

"I do hope—I do pray that my dear friend was not injured any."

"No, no," and then thinking that perhaps it would be an economy of time, Adele proceeded to relate her affair with the cub and its mother, making it as brief and pointed as possible. Vesey listened with many expressions of surprise and concern, and when she had finished added:

"A most remarkable adventure, Miss Adele, a most remarkable adventure, proving that you're a lady with plenty of nerve, so to speak."

"I must remind you, that we are standing motionless, and making no progress toward the Block House."

"Heaven save me, you speak the truth. How forgetful in me. Let me remind you, then, in the first

place, that you're going exactly wrong, and are several rods further from your destination than when you left that oak."

Adele was somewhat astonished when she heard this, as she was positive that she had taken the right course to reach home. But, remembering how natural it was for one in her situation to make such a mistake, she could do nothing but defer to the decision of her companion: and yet it was a "conviction against her judgment," and she could not forbear the feeling that she was plunging deeper and deeper into the forest, instead of extricating herself from it, as she followed in his footsteps.

"It's remarkable how a person, that is lost, will confuse distances," said he, appearing to understand her doubt. "I have often had occasion to note it myself in my travels. I was once on a journey up the Miami, with a small keg of my beverage, toward a small Shawnee town. I had to camp out over night, and when I awoke in the morning, you may hang me, if I hadn't forgot which way I'd come, and which way I wanted to go. So that all I could do was to guess it; and guess it I did, by throwing up my hunting-knife, and taking the direction it pointed when it dropped to the ground. About noon I met a Huron Indian, named Oonoomoo, who was scouting through woods. This same Oonoomoo had the name of being a Christian Indian—a Christian Indian! he! he! he! the idea!"

"And why not a Christian Indian, as well as a Christian white man?" asked Adele, indignant at the slur of her repulsive guide.

"The thing is onpossible, Miss Adele, onpossible. There's no such thing as a Christian Indian. They never existed, and never will."

"Are there any better white men than the Morovian Indians?"

"He! he! he! them Morovian Indians. They're

as bad as anybody. Hanker after blood all the time, and would scalp you as quick as look at you."

"I don't believe any such thing. They are far better than hundreds of white people who pretend to be Christians."

"He! he! he! hitting me there, I 'spose. But it don't alter the facts. But, as I was saying, I met this Oonoomoo, this Christian Huron, whom the Shawnees hate like pisen. He! he! if he was a Christian he didn't refuse a good swig from my can, when I offered it to him, if he would show me the way to the town I was looking for. He didn't refuse it, Miss Adele, not at all."

"The more shame upon you, who knew better. Much of the sin for which we blame the Indians, you will find, will have to be answered by the white men, who have placed temptation in their way. Why did you offer this Huron whisky, when you knew his appetite was so powerful?"

"He! he! what a question! In the first place, I wanted him to show me my way, and in the second place, you must know I done it for his good, for I contend that such prime stuff, as I sell, benefits any one. At least," added the whisky trader, in a low exultant tone, "it benefited me on that occasion."

"What do you mean?" asked Adele, who felt considerable curiosity.

"Why, that same swig of whisky was the means of a sharp transaction upon my part. You see, I got that Huron boozy, that Christian Indian dead drunk, and then axed him for the pay for my whisky. He said he hadn't any wampum, so I took his rifle—a splendid piece, silver mounted—his hunting-knife, powder-horn, and bullets, so that I thin I got pretty good pay for my beverage."

"Was it not pay enough that he should guide you when you were lost?"

"He! he! not quite. But, I declare, that reminds me of what I was going to say in the first place, when

that Huron showed me the way, (I made him show me before I paid him,) would you believe it was just the opposite from what I thought, which you remember was just what you thought."

"Did you ever meet that Indian again, whom you so deeply wronged?" asked Adele whose interest had been awakened in behalf of the Huron.

"Yes, I met him last summer, and how do you suppose the ungrateful dog served me? As before, I was plodding patiently through the wood, with my whisky-keg, when I come upon him. I'll own I felt a little skeerish when I seen how his black eyes was shining. He come and axed me to look at my rifle. Of course I didn't refuse, and he said it looked a good deal like one he once owned, and he guessed he'd take it along, if I didn't care particular. He done the same way with my knife, powder-horn, bullets, and everything, so that I hadn't any weapons at all left. Then he axed me for a little swig of 'fire-water,' as he called it. I told him I would do so on condition that he give me back my property. He said he'd see, which I think was as good as a promise. Well, ma'am, he took that keg of precious beverage, lifted it up over his head and then dropped it square on a stone that split it in forty pieces, and spilt every drop of the whisky."

"Now I am convinced, indeed, that he was a Christian Indian," exclaimed Adele, unable to conceal her admiration.

"A pretty kind of a Christian," contemptuously exclaimed Vesey. "But that ain't all he done. I got mad and swore, when he told me to git out of his sight, as quick as I could, or he'd fire into me. I seen he was a little riled, and so I commenced walking away. He hollered to me to run, or he'd shoot. But I was too proud and dignified to do that, and so I kept on walking, and he hollered again, but it didn't make any difference. I wasn't going to run at the command of any Indian, much less a Christian one."

"And did he really fire?"

"I'll be hanged, if the cuss didn't, and he hit me too."

"Were you wounded badly?"

"I was laid up all last winter, and it's made me walk lame ever since, and I expect it will until I die."

"Noble Oonoomoo, thou art worthy to be called a Christian, in that thou wert so lenient toward thine deadly enemy," exclaimed Adele, fervently.

Wilkins Vesey "he, he, he'd" at hearing this, but took no umbrage. From some cause or other, he was in unusual spirits, and seemed only anxious to amuse his companion. He was only a foot or two in advance of her, so that his words were plainly audible without his turning his head. Adele could tell when he was laughing by the bouncing up and down of his high shoulders and the never-failing "he, he, he," that appeared to come from away down in his body.

"Yes," he continued, "I have had some curious adventures in my time. I've traveled from western New York to western Ohio and Kentucky, and I've met many queer people, and they wan't all Indians, neither. One of the queerest chaps was a feller who called himself Seth Jones, from New Hampshire. I found him a prisoner among the Mohawks, singing songs, telling stories, pinching the Indian boys and women—playing 'em about their sweethearts, and making himself at home generally. Wal, there, you may kick me, if there was anything such as *scare* about that feller. Their mightiest chief, Occanlohaka, whose very name filled his warriors with fear, looked down upon him with a brow as black as a thunder-cloud. Would you believe it, when I tell you that that same Seth Jones winked at him several times, slapped him on the shoulder, and axed him for a chaw of tobacco. It was so, nevertheless."

"A strange sort of a man, certainly."

"His impudence was amazing—literally amazing. He threatened to whip one of their greatest warriors, giving as a reason that he didn't give him enough meat, and he did

slap a blanket around one's ears because he said the savage laughed at him, when the poor heathen was screwing up his face from a terrible pain that had seized him."

"It is strange that the Mehawks should have allowed such liberties."

"He! he! he! so it was, but he was so *alfired* sassy they couldn't help laughing at him. They tried all their tricks with him, but he wasn't to be scart. They done too much, got him tearing mad, and he up and killed one of 'em. Even then they didn't hurt him, and he got away at last."

"He was very fortunate, indeed, to escape so easily."

"Yes, but the best part of the matter was that his name wasn't Seth Jones, after all. He was a rich, handsome fellow from Eastern New York, after a gal that had wandered out on the frontier, and he made out to get her, too, and married her."

"I met another chap a good deal like him," added the garrulous whisky-trader, "save that, instead of not being skeery, he was the biggest coward I ever laid eyes on. His name was Pete Jenkins, a thin, scrawny, bow-legged individual, six feet high if he was stretched out straight. He was a great fellow to talk. I never seen his like. I met him in the woods with an old scarred hunter, named Dick Dingle, who looked more like a grizzly bear than a human being. They was out on a scout, too, for some of the settlements. I kindly invited 'em to take a swig, in the hope that I might be able to make as good a trade with them as I did with the Huron. The one who called himself Jenkins got gloriously discomfuddled, but I'll be hanged if the old hunter didn't drink half the keg dry without showing the least effects of it, and I couldn't get him to take another mouthful. Somehow or other Jenkins got it into his head that I was a gal—he! he! he! the first time I was taken to be one of the feminine gender. He kept calling me 'Frontier Angel,' or some other such outlandish name, and throwing his arms around me and hugging me. He! he! but he did make a fool of himself, though."

"Well, I left these two after some time and never seen him again. My adventures ain't all so amusing as them. I

have had serious ones," added Vesey, in a solemn tone. "There's a body of white hunters in existence at this minute known as the Riflemen of the Miami. They've got a cave up somewhere on that river, and I reckon they've done about as much fighting as any set of men about. They ain't fighters only, but they're *thieves*," exclaimed the speaker, spitefully. "Three times they stopped my canoe when coming down the river, and took every drop away from me."

"Didn't they pay you?"

"Well, yes. I suppose they did, but I didn't like to be stopped and served in that manner. I told 'em as much, too."

"What did they say to that?"

"Just laughed at me, and when I threatened to lick one of 'em, a feller that they called Tom O'Hara picked me up and throwed me into the river."

"A shameful way of acting toward a friend," added Vesey, waiting in vain for Adele to make some reply to his remark. "*I didn't forget it.*"

"You had revenge then?"

"Well, I can't exactly say that I did. I came across that same Tom O'Hara when he was alone, and pitched into him, intending to kill him very nearly. The only trouble was that I wasn't able, and instead of my licking him, he pommelled me half to death, smashed one end of my whisky-keg in, jammed it down over my head and shoulders, so tight that I had to walk all the way to Piqua and get my Indian friends to take it off. The awkward scamps used their tomahawks on it, and were so careless that they hit me several thwacks on the head before they got through."

"There is one more character that I must tell you about—a Dutchman, named Hans Vanderbum, who was so stupid that he didn't appear to know anything. I found him stretched out in a swamp, with his feet and arms under water, and a lighted meerschaum in his mouth, and sound asleep. I stirred him up, and after awhile got him to understand where he was and to say something. He told me his name, and that he had started out early in the morning (it

was then near the middle of the afternoon) on a hunt, and finding that he was unable to catch up with the deer and wild turkeys, he had laid down to wait for them to come to him. He didn't notice the water, and got asleep before he'd knowed it. I got him started home, but he hadn't gone far before he laid down and went to snoozing again. What became of him I don't know, but, as he wasn't very far from a settlement, I suppose he reached it in the course of a few days, though I'll warrant it was not much game he carried with him."

The whisky-trader continued rattling on, relating many incidents and adventures of his that will hardly bear the repetition, and Adele amused and disgusted by turns, listened without comment. Sometimes he addressed a question to her, when she simply replied. Full an hour passed thus, when she awoke, as if from a dream and saw that she was still in the woods. They had taken the wrong direction, and a startling suspicion flashed like lightning across her.

"Stop!" she commanded. "Wilkins Vesey, what does this mean?"

"What does what mean?" he asked, with an innocent air.

"We are not going toward the Block House. You are leading me away from it."

"I'll be hanged if I ain't afraid I have lost my way. But as I was saying about that affair of mine"—

"Not another word! I want none of your stories. Had I not listened too much to them I should have noticed that you were misleading me sooner than this. Do you know the way back?"

"Know the way? Of course I do: but isn't it strange that I should have lost my way?"

"Very strange, indeed; I don't understand it," said Adela, meaningly. "You say you know the way, and now, Wilkins Vesey, if you value your own safety, you will take me to the Block House as soon as you can reach it."

"He! he! he! you talk as if you were mad!"

"I am indignant at being served in this manner."

The usually meek, wild-spoken girl had enough spirit in her when it was aroused and the whisky-trader was slightly astonished at witnessing this outburst. The covert threat, too, did not exactly please him.

"What do you mean by saying that if I value my safety I will take you back? He! he! he! what do you mean?"

"Just what I say," she curtly replied.

"I don't like threats much, especially when I don't understand them."

"I mean this, if you have purposely led me astray there is more than one who will make you answer for it."

"He! he! he! you don't really think now, that I would do such a thing as that, my dear friend?"

"Prove your honesty, then, by taking me back as speedily as possible."

"That I will, indeed."

Vesey plunged so eagerly forward that Adele half regretted her sharp words, thinking that, perhaps, after all he might have mistaken his way in the earnestness of his different narratives. Still she could not rid herself of an uncomfortable misgiving, as she followed in his rapid footsteps, and she looked anxiously and longingly for some signs of the clearing of the Block House. It was with a painful throb that she noticed the sun was low in the west, and that darkness, at the most, could not be more than an hour or two distant.

Being utterly lost, and never having seen this portion of the wood, she could only conjecture of the direction they were pursuing. Had she been less excited and a little more thoughtful the position of the sun would have afforded her a clue. This, of course, always set upon the left of the Block House, and, as she had gone east from the latter, it is manifest that in order to reach her home, she should have taken a course near west, that is, directly toward the sun. Instead of this, however, she was proceeding due south.

A half hour later, when the twilight commenced stealing through the wood, Wilkins Vesey suddenly paused, and exclaimed:

"As sure as I'm a living man I've lost my way!"

Adele's heart sank within her, and she said, despairingly:

"Oh, don't say that!"

"I'm afraid we shall have to stay in the woods over night."

"I will not do that."

"But, my dear, how can you prevent it?" asked the Trader, in the most insinuating voice.

"We *must* reach home; I have suffered enough already for my imprudence."

"I trust we shall, but there ain't much prospect of it just now."

"Let us keep moving—don't stand idle."

Wilkins Vesey, cowed and humbled, obeyed her as a slave would obey his royal master. Onward he plodded rapidly, carefully and silently, as if driven before his imperial mistress. It was long again before he paused, with his "he! he! he!"

"What is the matter now?" demanded Adele.

"You may hang me if there ain't the very spring where I found you, and the oak, too!"

Such was, indeed, the case. After having gone mile after mile, and sacrificed their precious time, they had at last come back to their starting point, and were as far from the Block House as ever. There was one relief and consolation in this fact. While Adele had imagined they were a long way from home, this showed that the distance was comparatively small, and that, if they could only decide now upon the proper course, they could easily reach it before darkness set in.

"You are satisfied by this time, I suppose," said she, "that you took the wrong way?"

"Yes; I'll be hanged if I won't have to own up. I'll let you decide the matter."

Adele indicated the course she believed to be the proper one. As might be expected, this was further wrong than the one taken by Vesey. The latter saw it and chuckled:

"He, he, he! I believe you'll make a better woodman

than I will. You must be right. Howsumever, let me take the lead."

Adele consented, and once more they were moving rapidly through the forest, and, as she fondly trusted, approaching home every minute. Nevertheless, the gloom of night finally closed upon her, without her obtaining a glimpse of the wished-for clearing. On—on—she pressed, until she stopped at the sight of a glimmering light through the trees.

"What is that?" she asked in a whisper.

"A camp of hunters," replied the whisky-trader, with a leer of exultation. "We shall now find rest, kindness, and a guide to the Block House."

"How thankful I am that we should come upon white men at this moment," she added, passing eagerly forward.

"Very lucky, indeed. Don't look too much at the camp-fire, it might injure your eyes, they being used to the thick darkness of the wood."

Adele did look, nevertheless, so eager was her desire to reach the hunters. Vesey kept bouncing up and down, and flitting here and there before her face, as if to shut out her view, but being too small, he could not accomplish it.

"Heaven save me!" gasped Adele; "those are not hunters, they are Indians!"

"Oh, no! oh, no! it can't be. Come on! come on!" he urged, closing his raven-like fingers tightly around her arm.

"But they are Indians! I see them! Let us flee! Oh! what will become of me?"

"It's too late!" replied Vesey, hurriedly. "They have seen us."

Adele tore herself loose, and turned to flee, when she felt the muscular arm of a brawny Indian tighten around her waist, and with a despairing cry, she yielded to her fate.

CHAPTER XI.

It was not until the middle of the afternoon that Adele Hansell was missed from the Block House. Kingman asked

for her, and five minutes later every one knew that she was not within the stockade, or within hearing of their voices. Besides her, Dulland and Table were gone. It would be vain to attempt to picture the consternation of the Whitings as the dreadful truth was forced upon them. For a time they were almost speechless with terror, and then all manner of speculation and conjecture was indulged in.

"She may have wandered off to take a walk, and will be back in a few moments," said young Whiting, who could not forbear some compunctions of conscience at the reflection that it was his remissness which had brought about this sad state of affairs.

"Hardly possible. I am astonished, my son, that she could have escaped your notice."

"I'll be shot if I ain't considerably surprised, too, to understand how the thing happened."

"Remarkable--most remarkable," exclaimed Wilkins Vesey, dancing from one foot to another. "It can't be that she was so forgetful as to wander off alone. I can't—I can't believe it. *Somebody* had a hand in it."

He coughed and spit very vigorously several minutes to throw off the embarrassment of having drawn the eyes of all his listeners toward him.

"It will not do to remain here idle," said Kingman. "She may need our assistance every minute. Some one must attempt to follow her. If no one offers, I will do it myself."

"It won't do to expose the Block House to such a danger," replied the whisky trader. "It may be the very plan for which the Indians are plotting, and, besides, there ain't one of you that knows how to follow a trail in the woods. I can do it, and, if it's possible, I will bring the gal home to you."

After some more hurried conversation the offer of old Vesey was gladly accepted, and he took his departure. On the edge of the clearing he halloed back that he had discerned the footprints of the lost one, and the next moment he disappeared in the forest.

It was not until he had been gone some ten or fifteen minutes, that Kingman began to feel some uneasiness about him. When he came to reflect, it struck him that there was a suspicious eagerness in his offer to go in search of the girl, and the pertinacity with which he opposed any pursuit by the others. It was unwelcome and painful; but he could not free himself of the thought that the shrivelled being knew something of the cause of her absence.

"Why did we not call in Dulland and Table?" he said, as he stood a few minutes later talking to Mrs. Whiting and her husband.

"Do it at once," earnestly entreated the former. "They can assist us more than can any human arm."

Dulland could be at no great distance, and it was always understood that the discharge of a rifle at the Block House was to be the signal for him to return with all speed. He made it a point never to stray beyond the reach of the report, although Table was allowed to do it. Scarcely had ten minutes elapsed, after Kingman had fired his gun, when the rubicund visage of the hunter emerged from the woods, and he hurried across the clearing.

"Why, what's the matter? what's the matter? There hain't been an attack, has there?"

A few words explained everything to him.

"Bad business, bad business. Not so bad, after all, as you might s'pose," he added in a more cheerful voice.

"Where do you think she is?" asked Mrs. Whiting, who could not restrain her tears.

"Ain't far off, don't believe. Find her soon enough. Where's old Vesey?"

"Gone in search of her."

"Whew!" the hunter's mouth and eyes each took a perfectly circular shape, indicative of an *epreka* of words that was not exactly pleasing to him.

"Why, do you not think he will find her?"

"May be so, but *I hope he won't!*"

Kingman's heart sank within him at these words and he was sick to fainting when he said:

"Explain what you mean, Dulland, for the love of Heaven!"

"Tut, tut, you ain't skeart, now, be you? No need of that. I'm 'fraid that if Vesey should find her, he might not bring her *the right way home* that's all."

"And, I should reckon, that was about enough," said young Whiting. "Confound the old scoundrel——Where's Tahle?"

"He's off on a scent, and that puts me in mind of something that I forgot to tell you. There's a war-party of Indians out in the woods."

Startling as was this intelligence, it alarmed the hearers only for the sake of the missing Adele. She, absent in the forest, in the vicinity of a war-party of revengeful savages! Great, indeed, was her peril!

"I wish that Tahle was within hearing," said the hunter, "but I don't believe he is. Hosumever, I'll venture to toot for him."

As he spoke, the hunter gave vent to a bird-like call, which echoed like a distant car whistle through the woods. He repeated it several times, but, as he expected, it elicited no response.

"The scamp is off somewhere;" he said. "if he isn't here pretty soon, I'll take the trail myself."

"Much as I desire that you, who possess so much experience, should do this immediately," said Kingman, "still when we take into consideration what you have just told us, that is, that there is a large war-party of Indians in the vicinity, it seems to me it would be exposing us all to far greater danger."

"Right there," said the hunter, heartily; "the good of the greatest number is what we've to remember."

Could that round, honest looking face, rosy and jovial—those clear, innocent blue eyes—that musical voice, so rich and earnest—could they be the mask of the most deadly cunning and treachery? Impossible! And yet was there not the strongest circumstantial evidence that such was the case.

Such were the thoughts of Kingman and young Whiting,

as they listened to the lively remarks of this young hunter, and this mistrust, united with what was already known, made the two wretched, indeed.

"Tahle is great on a trail; that's where he *spreads*," continued the hunter, growing eloquent in the praises of his dusky friend. "It's wonderful to see the *genius* of that dog. When he lays himself out, I knock under. He can beat me at two things—running, and following a trail."

"At nothing else?"

"No sir; if I do say it, myself. Put me and him in a canoe, and I'll keep alongside of him all day, or give me Polly, here, and I can draw bead on anything that he or any other Shawnee can, or in any other sort of wood craft, I can come up to him."

"I should like to have some evidence of his skill," said young Whiting.

"You can make up your mind that you will before you're many months older. Now, maybe you won't believe it, but I'll bet that Tahle will scent that camp-fire before he's within a half mile of it. The old copperhead can spread on a smell, too. Don't know but what I'll have to own up there. Sometimes he fancies that he smells the trail instead of seeing it, but he's smart enough to do both."

"Do you know anything of old Vesey's skill in that line?"

"Can't compare him to Tahle, of course, but he's got considerable of the genius in him."

"Suppose he finds the trail of Adele, do you think he will be able to follow?"

"Yes—like enough; and that Shawnee beauty can follow both."

At this juncture, the elder Whiting, who had gone to watch the clearing, called out that Tahle was approaching. A moment later, he was admitted within the gate, where the unusual warmth with which he was greeted made his black eyes shine with wonder, and brightened up that forbidding eclipse of his countenance. Dulland, the hunter, in

a few words, explained what had happened, and what was wished of him.

"Shawnees all round in woods," said he, "'fraid catch gal."

"But there is one already searching for her."

"Who him?"

"Old Vesey, the whisky-trader."

"Ugh! bad—no good—bad man. Table go now."

The point on the edge of the clearing, where Vesey announced he had discovered the trail, was indicated to the Shawnee. After a second or so spent in examination, he confirmed its truth. Her footprints were easily discernible to him, and without a moment's loss of time he plunged into the forest on the search.

"Table is a great old scamp!" said the hunter. "He and I have been on many a tramp together. Queer in his way, but we never have any trouble in getting along together. I sometimes quiz him and punch his ribs, and his face looks black at me, but I can see something in his eyes that shows plain enough he's only putting it on, and I know he'd never get mad unless I did. Ha! ha! One time when he was asleep I tied his long, black hair round a small tree, and fastened his ankles together, and then hit him a crack to wake him up. Whew! if he didn't tear around when I let him loose. Said he was going to take my scalp, and I seen he meant it."

"He did? I thought an Indian never forgot an insult."

"They don't, nor a kindness neither, and Table made up his mind that I meant that for a kindness. When he said he would take my scalp I just bent my head down and told him to take it. What do you s'pose he did?"

"I am sure I can't tell."

"Turned his head away for a minute, and then actually axed me to forgive him."

"You did, of course?"

"I guess I did. Dulland ain't the man that holds a grudge agin anybody."

"Yes, Table is a great old boy. I'd be satisfied if I was sure I was going to reach heaven and find him there, or

have him find me there, according as which of us goes under first."

In the meantime, Tahle, the friendly Indian, was following up the trail with the certainty and persistency of the bloodhound. His head was bent, and his black basilisk eyes fixed upon the ground, where the unerring signs that guided him on his course would have been invisible to all but the experienced eye of the hunter. Not once did he pause or hesitate. The brown leaf that had been overturned, the bush whose side had not yet returned to the precise position from which it had been brushed, the depressed moss and grass—all these were "confirmations strong as holy writ."

As the shadows gathered in the forest and the gloom rendered objects indistinct and uncertain his footsteps were quickened until he was nearly upon a run. At the spring which had been such a scene of terror to Adele, the Indian halted in perplexity. His eagle eye saw at once that something unusual had occurred upon this spot, but with all his wonderful subtlety of mind, he was puzzled for some time to understand what it could possibly be. The tracks of the bear and her cub, and the place where the girl had been seated were easily made out, but he failed to discover any evidences of violence, and it was plainly manifest that in going away Adele had done so upon a mere common walk.

How that fearful eclipse of the Shawnee's face darkened as he discovered the footprints of the whisky-trader and the lost girl, leading off in an opposite direction from that toward the Block House! He uttered some exclamation in his natural tongue, and the arrow that flies from the bow was hardly more swift and silent than was his course through the woods in the pursuit. A few hundred yards further on he came upon a piece of her dress, and this confirmed him in the belief that the villainous dwarf had compelled his companion to take the course that were then pursued.

By this time it was quite dark, and the piercing eyes of the Shawnee failed to follow the slight trail upon the ground; but the cunning savage knew that none but a direct course

would be followed by two persons in the situation of the pursued, and abandoning the futile labor of attempting to keep their path in sight, he sped directly forward. At intervals he paused for a moment, and bending close to the ground, scrutinized it with great care. The result in each case was a revelation of the trail, showing that he had taken the surest and most rapid method to come up with those whom he was pursuing.

Onward shot the phantom like figure of the Shawnee as persistently and relentlessly as Fate itself. Suddenly the glimmer of a light through the trees started him upon a swift run. He saw Adele Hansell and the whisky-trader in earnest converse—the one apparently remonstrating and supplicating, the other urgent and commanding. Table comprehended the imminence of the danger, and making one bound forward, he threw his brawny arm around her waist, and swinging her clear off her feet, leaped off to the left.

The whisky trader recognized the form of the friendly Indian, and with his maniacal “he! he! he!” he called out:

“Why, that’s you, ain’t it, Table?”

“Die, dog!” exclaimed the latter, pausing for a moment, and circling his tomahawk with lightning rapidity above his head, he hurled it with tremendous force at the shriveled form of Vesey. The latter, quick as thought, dropped flat upon his face and as the instrument shot over him, he shouted:

“What in blazes are you trying to hit me for? He! he! he!”

This confusion and outcry, occupying scarce a minute, had attracted the notice of the Shawnees around the camp-fire, and they could now be seen flitting through the trees, as they cautiously but rapidly approached the scene of the tumult.

It required but a moment for them to comprehend the true nature of affairs. Wilkins Vesey was pounced upon as a prisoner, while several started in pursuit of the flying Shawnee and the rescued girl. Table fully understood the

peril that now threatened him and his charge, and he called all his powers into play to meet it.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ESCAPE.

The Shawnee did not impede the flight of Adele by any offers of assistance upon his part. Lithe, active, and fully conscious of her danger, she needed only his guidance to follow in his swift footsteps. The wood being mostly open, the obstructions to their progress was comparatively slight, and for several hundred yards the speed of the girl was absolutely astonishing; but great as it was, it could not be expected to equal that of her muscular pursuers. Fully conscious of this, the wary Tahle knew that her only hope of ultimate escape lay in misleading them, and the two had gone but comparatively a short distance when his ready mind decided upon the means by which it should be done.

The exhausting speed of the girl was maintained until the watchful Shawnee saw unmistakable signs of weariness, when, with one tremendous bound, he placed himself beside her, and said, in his sharp, sententious tones :

“Turn dis way—run fast—den stop!”

The panting fugitive obeyed him, and a moment later the two suddenly halted beneath a wide-spreading beech, whose limbs were scarce higher than their heads.

“Climb up this, quick!” said Tahle.

How this was to be done, Adele was at a loss to comprehend, until the brawny savage, bending one of the branches with his left hand, placed his right arm around her waist and lifted her almost bodily to a seat upon the limb.

"Go further," said he, as she steadied herself with some difficulty at first.

She obeyed him, approaching the trunk of the tree, and ascending almost to the top, while he, apparently satisfied that all that could be done for her had already been done, darted away with the speed of an arrow. Shortly after, his defiant whoop was heard by the girl, and the solemn stillness that followed showed that the cunning Shawnee had succeeded in drawing his countrymen in pursuit of himself, without suspecting the ruse which had been adopted to deceive them.

Left alone in the midnight forest, with no idea of her location, or of the whereabouts of her friends or enemies, Adele Hansell's situation was certainly an unenviable one, and no one could be more sensible of her loneliness than was herself. Great as was her faith in the sagacity and woodcraft of her dusky friend, she could but doubt his ability to return to her hiding-place before morning, when her danger, as a consequence, would be vastly increased. Bitterly, indeed, did she regret her foolhardiness in venturing into the woods alone, and more than once did she shudder at the recollection of her narrow escape from the savages encamped in the neighborhood.

The whisky-trader again came up in her thoughts. Disagreeable, repulsive and hideous, she strove to drive it from her; but strive as much as she might, she could not succeed. While there was every appearance of treachery in his course with her, she recollected that he was eagerly seized by the Shawnees, as if they esteemed his possession a great prize—a fact hardly compatible with the idea of collusion between the two.

While thus engaged in thought, she became sensible of a tremor or faint shaking of the tree, as if some person or animal were at the trunk. Her heart thrilled at the thought that Tahle had returned, and she was about to call out to him, when something restrained the words when they were upon her tongue.

It might possibly be an enemy, and the bare possibility was terrible.

Peering down through the branches, she was unable for a time to detect anything; but the tremor of the tree continuing, she finally discerned the shadowy outlines of a dark, ball-like object, that appeared to swing out from the trunk, and secure itself upon one of the lowermost limbs. Some person, therefore, was ascending the tree, and whether a friend or an enemy was the all-important question.

Whoever the intruder might be, he showed no disposition to disturb the perch of the girl above him. Halting a dozen feet or so beneath her, he extended himself full length upon a large limb, as if he was waiting the approach of some one. This proceeding satisfied Adele at once that he was not Tahle, but an enemy.

This startling discovery might well occasion the most serious alarm. While there was no evidence to fear that the stranger had the remotest suspicion of the proximity of herself, it still showed that he, at least, must have some knowledge of the action and intention of Tahle. Suppose the latter returned to the tree in the course of the next few hours, as Adele hoped and believed he would, he would walk directly into a trap set for him, and fall a victim before he could possibly receive a warning from any one.

Adele's great fear was now for the safety of Tahle. Although fully sensible of her own peril, she was well assured that the Indian below her would not ascend any further in the tree, at least until something occurred to excite his suspicion. She was entirely invisible for the present, and had only to continue quiet to remain thus. Should the friendly Shawnee approach, he certainly would not dream that one of his deadliest enemies was perched almost on the same branch with herself, while the savage, placed upon his guard, would take every means at his command to slay his unsuspecting countryman.

In the midst of this torment of doubt and apprehension, the crackling of the underbrush caught her ear. This very occurrence, at any other time, would have proved that it was not the cautious Tahle who was approaching, for he was never so careless as to betray himself; but she felt that it was only the means which he had taken to apprise her of his proximity.

Adele feared that the throbbing of her heart would be heard by the savage beneath her, as she listened and strove to catch the outlines of her friend through the branches of the tree. His regular step was heard upon the leaves below, and a sudden quietness showed that he had halted directly under the branches. Still the girl could catch no sign of him, although she fancied she could see his swarthy face, with its dark eternal eclipse, gazing up in quest of her.

Standing thus a moment, the Shawnee called her name in a tone so low that it was scarcely above a whisper. She trembled with fear, and dare not make any reply. A second time the savage repeated it, and then waited a considerable time for an answer, but none came.

The stillness of the hostile Indian surprised Adele greatly. When Tahle called the second time, he repeated his own name, and it struck the girl that perhaps this fact had something to do with the unusual quietude of the intruder. Perhaps he had no desire to encounter the terrible being who had forewarned his kindred, and who showed no mercy to a foe. The opportunity for shooting him had occurred several times, yet the Shawnee had taken no advantage of it. It might be, after all, that he was waiting for a more favorable chance.

A third time Tahle repeated the name of Adele, and immediately after she heard a trembling of the tree, as though he had commenced ascending it. Fearful of what the consequences would be, she instantly replied, in a loud tone, assuring her dusky friend that she would descend and rejoin him instantly. This

satisfied him, and dropping to the earth again, he awaited her descent.

The moment of trial had come, and Adele nerved herself for it. She was confident the hostile savage would do one of two things; he would either permit her to leave the tree unmolested, or else would do his utmost to stay her when she came within his reach. The probabilities, she was convinced, were sadly in favor of the latter course.

She meditated leaping directly from the branch to the ground, but the height was too great, and she ran considerable risk of being caught in the limbs. She concluded at length to commence her descent as though she had no suspicion of the presence of the Indian, passing on the opposite side of the trunk. She determined to move cautiously, and in case he made the least demonstration, she was resolved to spring at once to the ground and warn Tahle of their danger.

Moving a couple of feet from the body of the tree, she stepped carefully to the next limb, and then, pausing a moment, placed her foot upon the third. All this time she was straining her eyes to the utmost to catch a glimpse of the Shawnee. She had descended but a short distance when she discovered him. He was crouched like a huge ball, close to the trunk, where he could seize her as she passed within his reach.

Adele could scarcely support herself, as step by step she approached this horrible spectre. Conscious, that with his panther-like agility and strength, he could slay her in an instant, she suffered the horrors of death over and over again. When fairly opposite the dreadful object it seemed to possess her like a nightmare, and she paused a moment as if transfixed. She either saw or fancied she saw the glowing eyeballs of the Indian, and she heard distinctly his suppressed respiration. As she looked upon the dark, awful, and immovable figure she felt that it was harmless for the present, and continued her descent once more. From the lowermost limb she dropped like a snowflake to the ground, where she found the faithful Tahle waiting. The savage

did not speak, but taking her by the wrist, he struck off at a rapid walk in the forest.

The two had not gone a dozen yards when a shrill, echoing yell shook the arches of the wood, and the Shawnee stopped as if struck by a bolt from heaven.

"Dat come from tree," he said.

"Yes, there was an Indian concealed in the branches. I saw him when I came down."

The darkness was too great for Adele to discern the features of her guide, but she could see that his face was turned upon her, and she could imagine the blank look of amazement that was stamped upon that swarthy countenance. He did not allow himself to lose any time now, doubly precious by this discovery. He recognized the shout of the Shawnee as a signal to his companions, many of whom were in the vicinity, who would lose no time in obeying it.

For one single moment, the Indian hesitated whether to risk a return to the tree, and make an effort to obtain the scalp of his enemy, or, to adopt the more prudent course, and flee with his charge. His disposition tempted him strongly to the former, but a regard for the safety of the girl decided him at last to forego that pleasure for the present, and he moved on again.

Tahle merely walked, not requiring Adele to run as she had done before. One reason for this was, that although he himself could pass over the leaves with scarcely any perceptible noise, she had not acquired that delicate art, and the quick ear of a Shawnee could have detected the attempt at once. Moving with the utmost caution, he kept his head bent, so as to catch the slightest sound of his enemies.

It was not more than a minute after the utterance of the signal of the Indian when three distinct replies were given from as many different quarters. They were somewhat similar to the first, and Tahle understood them to mean that the call was being obeyed. This fact made his situation, at the least, uncomfortably dangerous—the approaching Indians all converging toward the point where he was now

standing. A passive course rendered a discovery almost unavoidable, while great care was necessary to conduct Adele Hansell safely beyond their hearing. In the confusion of the first flight, when fully a dozen Indians were in pursuit, and who separated at the commencement, the matter of silence was of little importance, as the noise made by the fugitives could not have been distinguished from that of the pursuing savages themselves, but now, as has been remarked, all depended upon the quietness of their movements.

The Indian endeavored to impress this in his own peculiar way upon Adele, who promised to comply with his injunctions, as far as it was possible for her to do so, and, taking the lead, as usual, Table resumed his flight with more caution and stealth than had characterized his movements heretofore.

The two had gone, perhaps, a hundred yards or more, when Table suddenly paused and whispered:

"Shawnee comin'."

Adele listened intently, but could hear nothing. In a moment more Table added:

"Shawnee comin' this way."

And, as he spoke, he led her to a large tree, admonishing her to stand as steadily as possible, and not to stir until he gave her permission. At the same time, he took his station by the body of an adjoining one, as if he was awaiting the approach of some one.

Adele now heard a rustling, such as the wanderer in the woods will hear on a still summer afternoon, when a bird or two are hopping over the leaves near him—a sound which she well knew was made by approaching Indians. Nearer and nearer they came, until all at once she saw a shadowy form emerge from the darkness and advance directly toward her. Remembering the injunction of Table, she did not move, and scarcely breathed, as the savage passed on so close that she could have touched him by simply stretching out her arm. A second and third moved by in the same manner, when, believing that all danger was over, she changed her position by stepping back from the tree.

At that instant, another figure rose apparently from the very earth, and less than ten feet distant. It followed on in the path of the others for a step or two, when, perhaps, catching the slight noise made by the movement of the girl, he paused. It was a fearful moment for Adele! The dim, shadowy figure of her enemy arrested by herself, when perhaps the involuntary movement of a limb would betray her presence to him! But she stood it like a heroine, and after but a short pause the Shawnee moved on out of sight in the darkness.

When they were fairly out of hearing, Table made his appearance, and the homeward march was resumed. They were a long distance from the Block House, but the woodcraft of the friendly Indian was unerring. A couple of hours later they emerged into the clearing, and Adele's heart throbbed with joy as the form of the jagged stockade loomed up to view. Shortly after they were admitted within the gate, when the lost maiden was welcomed as if she had risen from the dead.

Wilkins Vesey's character was at last known, and nothing more was seen of him in the vicinity of the Block House. He had too good reason to fear the vengeance of those whom he had outraged so shamefully, and the settlers began to congratulate themselves that they were at last rid of him.

One rainy morning, when Kingman went to the well he found that a quantity of dirt had fallen in, and as it rendered the water unfit for use, measures were at once taken to cleanse the water. Upon going down, almost the first thing discovered was the dead body of Vesey, the whisky-trader. His whole plan was then seen at a glance. He had been to work assiduously for weeks in digging a subterranean passage, opening into the well, through which he and his Indian confederates might steal upon, and surprise the garrison. But while at work it caved in, and thus he had been overtaken, and punished by God, instead of man.

Here it is proper to close our history of the Block House. We had laid out a more extended history, but space will not permit. The settlers gradually gathered around it, until a formidable settlement arose, which in time became a

town, and is now a city. Among the leading inhabitants fifty years since, were Sherman Kingman and his charming, loveable wife, formerly Adele Hansell, and to-day, their descendants are among the most widely-known and respected in the great West.

Table and Dulland hunted many long years together, and the former finally fell by the hands of his hereditary enemies. Dulland mourned him long and fervently, and finally, when old age came upon him, he, too, followed after, and joined him in the bright lands beyond the setting sun.

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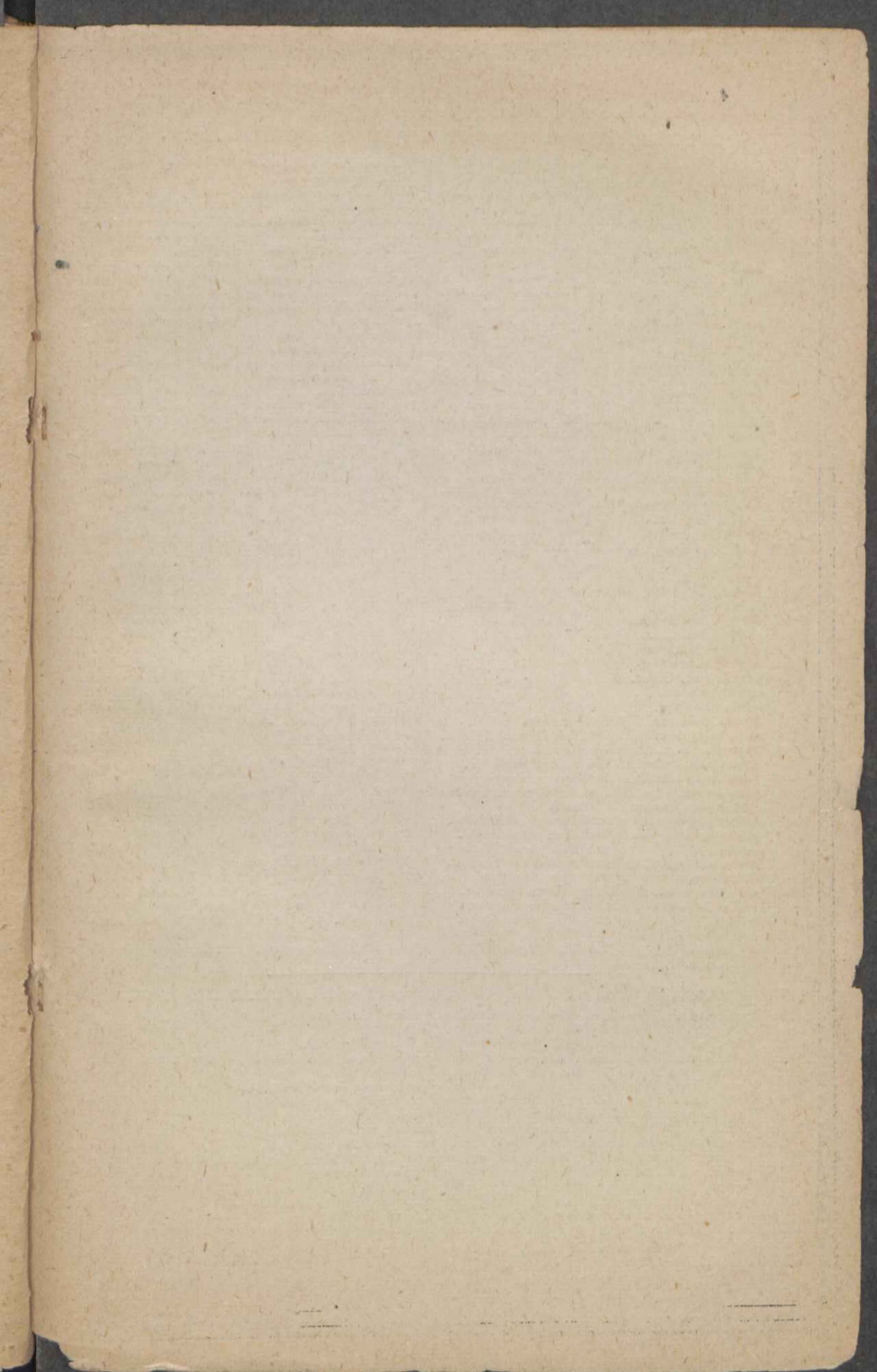
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| 92 The Antelope Boy. | | | |
| 93 The Phantom Hunter. | | | |

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 260 **Red Ax, The Indian Giant.** By Paul Bibbs. Ready June 10th.
 261 **Stella, the Spy.** By N. C. Iron. Ready June 24th.
 262 **The White Avenger.** By Major Lewis W. Carson. Ready July 8th.
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